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THE PAPERS OF THE HYMN SOCIETY

CARL F. PRICE *Editor*

I

THE HYMNS of JOHN BUNYAN

by

LOUIS F. BENSON, D.D.

THE HYMN SOCIETY
NEW YORK CITY
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The Hymns of John Bunyan

It hardly occurs to us to think of Bunyan as a poet. But there is reason to believe that he so thought of himself, and that in saying, "Man's heart is apt in metre to delight," he described his own. Readers of *The Pilgrim's Progress* are aware that each part has a poetical introduction and the first a poetical conclusion also, and that the narrative has a way of breaking out into verse. Very few of its readers know of the considerable body of his writings in verse. His *A Book for Boys and Girls*, for instance, has some eighty pages of "Rhimes," and among his separate poems is one of fourteen hundred and another of two thousand lines. Bunyan's verse is often characterized as doggerel—which is hardly fair—and by one of his biographers as "respectable." It is best described as being didactic rather than poetic in motive and accomplishment, with here and there a strain justifying Bunyan's own estimate of his gift:

> "I could, were I so pleas'd, use higher Strains.
> And for Applause, on Tenters stretch my Brains."

Until very lately even less thought has been given to Bunyan as a hymn writer, either in fact or *in posse*. And there is no reason to suppose that he so thought of himself, although two lyrics in *A Book for Boys and Girls* are provided with appropriate melodies. In his day the Particular Baptists were in the thick of the bitter "Controversie as to Singing," with its special cases of conscience; 1st. Should there be any singing in God's House? 2d. If so, who should sing? and, 3rd. What should they sing? Bunyan thought singing in worship a divine ordinance, but that it should be confined to professed members of the church. Or so I interpret the 54th chapter of his *Solomon's Temple Spiritualized*. Whether, with Benjamin Keach, he favored the introduction of humanly composed evangelical hymns or, with Keach's opponents, stood by the metrical psalms, I am less clear.

We may safely say that Bunyan wrote no church hymns by intent, and that for two centuries the consideration of the availability of anything he wrote for use as a hymn was confined to some of his coreligionists, and in the church at large had no existence at all.

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The best proof of this is the notice taken of Bunyan in the very inclusive *Dictionary of Hymnology*, by Dr. John Julian, published in 1892. Of its 1521 double-columned pages only eight lines are given to Bunyan, which read: "This great allegorist cannot be included amongst hymn writers, except that his piece, 'He that is down needs fear no fall,' from pt. ii of his *Pilgrim's Progress*, 1684, is given in a limited number of hymnals. The son of a mechanic, he was b. at Elstow, 1628; was a Baptist minister at Bedford; and d. in London, Aug. 1688."

Indeed, the hymnals here referred to were so few and so obscure that Doctor Julian's notice may be regarded as a waiver rather than a recognition of Bunyan's claim to be included there. Fifteen years later, in his second edition of 1907, Doctor Julian notes that the hymn, "Who would true valour see," was included in E. Paxton Hood's *Our Hymn Book*, 1873,[1] and more recently in *The English Hymnal* of 1906. *Our Hymn Book* and *The English Hymnal* were the most unconventional hymn books of their respective periods. Each in its turn sought to widen the horizon of an acceptable hymnody and each came freshly upon Bunyan's hymn in the search for unfamiliar material. *Our Hymn Book* included also Bunyan's "He that is down needs fear no fall." The only other piece of his to appear in later church hymnals is "Let the most blessed be my guide."

All three of these are from the lyrics mingled with the narrative of the Second Part of *The Pilgrim's Progress;* and it may be said with some confidence that they comprise all of Bunyan's verse available for use as church hymns. For school use the *Council School Hymn Book* (London, 1905) adopted his paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer, beginning "Our Father which in Heaven art," from *A Book for Boys and Girls* (1686, p. 8); just why is not very apparent. And if I were making an anthology of child-songs I should certainly wish to include the charming lyric, set to music on page 40 of the same book, beginning

> "My little Bird, how can'st thou sit
> And sing amidst so many Thorns!"

[1]Doctor Julian was evidently not aware that the hymn appeared in the first edition of *Our Hymn Book*, Brighton, 1862.

I

MERCIE'S SONG

(THE SECOND PART, 1684: p. 20)

Christiana and her children have now begun the pilgrim life. Of her neighbors some would dissuade her, but young Mercie ("for she was but young") sympathized and would walk with her a little way this Sun-shine Morning, and is persuaded by her to accompany her to the Wicket Gate. Very soon Mercie falls aweeping as she thinks of her poor relations yet lingering in the sinful town. Whereat Christiana reminds Mercie that he that goeth forth and weepeth bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

"Then" said *Mercie*,
"*Let the most blessed be my guide,*
If't be his blessed Will,
Unto *his Gate*, into *his fould*[2]
Up to *his Holy Hill.*
And let him never suffer me
To swarve, or turn aside
From his free grace, and Holy ways,
Whate're shall me betide.
And let him gather them of mine,
That I have left behind.
Lord, make them pray they may be thine,
With all their heart and mind."

A quaint and simple little lyric, and graceful, both in the spiritual and the artistic sense.

Dr. Joseph Belcher, in what *The Christian Examiner* (November, 1859) called his "superficial, feeble, inadequate, incorrect, and bigoted" *Historical Sketches of Hymns* (Philadelphia, 1859), is authority for the statement that this hymn "has very long been used in some of the Baptist churches in England at the admission of members, sometimes with very happy effect."[3] I do not know the source of Doctor Belcher's knowledge of the fact of its use, or his opportunity of estimating the happy effect. I do not happen to have found it in such Baptist hymn books, new or old, as I have examined, nor, indeed, in any hymn book except my own *Christian Song*. But I should agree

[2]"his fold," 1687.

[3]Dr. Henry S. Burrage, in his *Baptist Hymn Writers and their Hymns* (Portland, Maine, n. d.) p. 27, repeats this statement, but entirely upon Belcher's authority.

that such an use of these verses as Doctor Belcher suggests, might have a very happy effect. It seems to me one of the sweetest of pilgrim songs, in its phrasing and cadences, its simplicity of spiritual forelooking and its turn backward toward those left behind with a yearning that modulates indirect prayer into direct intercession.

II

THE SHEPHERD BOY'S SONG

(THE SECOND PART, 1684: p. 100)

Christiana and her party have come to the Valley of Humiliation, in whose low-lying meadows many laboring men had found fruitful estates, for God who resisteth the proud, assisteth the humble. As they are going along they espy a boy "in very mean cloaths," feeding his father's sheep. And where he sat by himself he sang. And this is what the Shepherd boy sang in the Meadows of Humiliation:

	"He that is down, needs fear no fall,
Philip. 4.	*He that is low, no Pride:*
12, 13.	*He that is humble, ever shall*
	Have God to be his Guide.
	I am content with what I have,
	Little be it, or much:
	And Lord, contentment still I crave,
	Because thou savest such.
Heb.	*Fullness to such a burden is*
13, 5.	*That go on Pilgrimage:*
	Here little, and hereafter Bliss,
	Is best from Age to Age."

A winsome lyric of the submerged grace of doing without, that almost persuadeth one to be a Pilgrim. It is quite in line with Saint Paul's suggestion that a runner encumbers himself by carrying luggage, but it will neither appeal to the patrons of wealth nor become the favored song even of zealous book collectors. None the less it was the first of Bunyan's hymns to find a place in the hymn books: a place that is being recovered in some of the most significant of current hymnals. From the epochal *The English Hymnal* of 1906, where we should anticipate finding it, it is missing, but it is included in *The Oxford Hymn Book* of 1908, *Songs of Praise* (1925), and the

revised edition of *The Church Hymnary* (1927). And this hymn is the only one of Bunyan's versifyings to find a place as poetry in *The Oxford Book of English Verse* of Quiller-Couch.

The opening line has (presumably by intention) the force and familiarity of a proverb. It is pretty nearly identical with a line in Samuel Butler's *Hudibras*—

> "I am not now in Fortune's Power,
> *He that is down can fall no lower.*"[4]

And Butler's annotator[5] quotes from the Latin, "*Qui jacet in terram, non habet unde cadat,*" and, from a Cavalier Song, "He that lies on the Ground, cannot fall." But it is interesting to note that Bunyan transforms a physical fact into an inward experience, and that what in Butler's poem was no more than Hudibras' ironical consolation of himself at escaping further downthrusts of fortune by reaching the bottom becomes at Bunyan's hand the parable of a spiritual grace.

III

VALIANT'S SONG

(THE SECOND PART, 1684: p. 181)

Mr. Valiant-for-Truth, at "*the, enchanted—Ground,*" has been explaining how he happened to come a pilgriming and how he overcame varied obstacles and the dissuasions of the prudent by keeping his eyes upon the goal:

"*Greath. Then this was your Victory, even your Faith.*

"*Valiant.* It was so, I believed, and therefore came out, got into the Way, fought all that set themselves against me, and by believing am come to this Place.

> "*Who would true Valour see,*
> *Let him come hither;*
> *One here will Constant be,*
> *Come Wind, come Weather.*
> *There's no Discouragement,*
> *Shall make him once Relent,*
> *His first avow'd Intent,*
> *To be a Pilgrim.*

---

[4]Part I, canto iii, lines 877-8. Here and elsewhere the italics indicate a free quotation.

[5]*Hudibras:* ed. by Zachary Grey. Cambridge, 1744.

Who so beset him round,
With dismal Storys,
Do but themselves confound;
His strength the more is,
No Lyon can him fright,
He'l with a Gyant Fight,
But he will have a right,
To be a Pilgrim
Hobgoblin, *nor foul* Fiend,
Can daunt *his Spirit:*
He knows, he at the end,
Shall Life Inherit.
Then Fancies fly away,
He'l fear not what men say,
He'l labor Night and Day,
To be a Pilgrim."

This dramatically virile song makes a great contrast with the two other hymns in technique, but in spirit is characteristic enough. For to Bunyan bravery is the root virtue of Christian character and the only possible equipment for the pilgrim life. But how far the song is an independent inspiration or how far suggested from outside has been questioned.

Perhaps Mr. Froude was the first to call attention to its likeness to one of Shakespeare's songs:

"Though the Globe Theatre was in the opinion of Nonconformists, 'the heart of Satan's empire,' Bunyan must yet have known something of Shakespeare. . . . The resemblance to the song in *As You Like It* is too near to be accidental."[6]

The song in the First Folio (Act ii, scene v) reads as follows:

SCENA QUINTA

Enter, Amyens, Iaques, & others

Song

Under the greene wood tree,
who loues to lye with mee
And turne his merrie Note,
vnto the sweet Birds throte:
Come hither, come hither, come hither:
Heere shall he see no enemie,
But Winter and rough Weather.

[6]Bunyan in *English Men of Letters:* ed. New York, 1880, p. 93.

Iaq. More, more, I pre'thee more [followed by 27 lines of dialogue ending with Jaques "Come, warble, come"].

Song. Altogether heere
Who doth ambition shunne,
and loues to liue i'th Sunne:
Seeking the food he eates,
and pleas'd with what he gets:
Come hither, come hither, come hither,
Heere shall he see. &c.

The two sections appear to be one song in two stanzas, having a common refrain, but have been also regarded by musical composers as separate songs.

Froude further suggested that "Bunyan may perhaps have heard the lines, and the rhymes may have clung to him without his knowing whence they came"—a suggestion hardly in line with the earlier remark that "Bunyan must have known something of Shakespeare."

Dr. John Brown, most careful of the biographers who succeeded Froude, shares his confidence in the connection of the two songs, saying (in a footnote), "Bunyan had surely read Shakespeare's *As you like it*, and there met with this song:"[7]—and proceeds to quote (as Froude had done) the second part only of Amyens' song.

But when and where did Bunyan "surely read" *As You Like It?* One may say that in his youth he could not and that in his maturity he would not. Was ever youth more completely cut off from the world of books? "I never went to school, to Aristotle and Plato, but was brought up at my father's house, in a very mean condition, among a company of poor countrymen."[8] And was ever a mature writer so indifferent to the world of letters? "He does not seem," as Vice-Chancellor Baillie puts it, "to have read more than about half a dozen books in his life."[9]

There were the two books his bride brought (apparently her whole patrimony) to a cottage that had neither forks nor spoons —Dent's *The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven* and Bayly's *The Practice of Piety*. "In these I should sometime read with her."

[7] *John Bunyan: His Life Times and Work*, Ed. Boston, 1888, p. 281.
[8] "Epistle to the Reader" in *Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded.*
[9] "The Mind of John Bunyan" in *The Hibbert Journal*, Vol. 27, No. 3, p. 387.

These books led him not only to the parish church but to a deeper interest in the Bible that was to become his inseparable companion. The Authorized Version became the model of his style, but he must have had access also to a copy of the Genevan version, from which he often quotes. And with one or the other, very likely, the "Singing Psalms" of Sternhold and Hopkins were bound in: may be *The Book of Common Prayer* also. Then there was the ancient copy of Luther's *Commentary on the Galatians* he "happed upon" and valued highly, "so old that it was ready to fall to pieces in his hand if he did but turn it over."[10] Lastly, there was a copy of Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, which he took to jail and which with the Bible constituted his library during the long period of captivity in which *The Pilgrim's Progress* was written. And this seems to fill out Bunyan's connection with books, unless we hold with some that *The Holy War* was influenced by *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*.

"One may indeed wish," the Vice-Chancellor goes on to say, "that Bunyan had had the first folio of Shakespeare with him during his long years in Bedford gaol." And the apparition, called up by this very odd wish, of the figure of Bunyan in his cell bending over a copy of the First Folio is so comical as to cast a ghostly light upon Doctor Brown's assurance that Bunyan had been reading *As You Like It* before composing Valiant's Song.

The Vice-Chancellor himself regards Froude's conclusion that Valiant's Song owed its origin to Shakespeare as "a very doubtful suggestion." A recent biographer of Bunyan, Professor Speight of Dartmouth, admits that he "*may have heard* Shakespeare's 'who doth ambition shun,' but the indebtedness was limited to a word here and there."[11] This disclaimer, or even this limitation, of Bunyan's indebtedness to Shakespeare is somewhat surprising. I should have supposed that any student or practicioner of verse would feel instinctively that Bunyan's song is not an independent creation but is related to the earlier one in its manner of approach, its opening line, its movement and lilt, and its imitative phrasing.

But Professor Speight's suggestion (reminiscent of Froude's alternative explanation) that Bunyan "may have heard" rather

[10]There was a number of editions in English, beginning with 1575.

[11]*The Life and Writings of John Bunyan*, by Harold E. B. Speight: New York, 1928, p. 171. The italics are mine.

than read the song in *As You Like It* is altogether likely; and that he heard it often and himself joined in singing it, in his unregenerate days, is also likely enough. The rising tide of Puritanism had not quenched the English love of singing and of the dance.[12] And it is quite clear that as a youth Bunyan loved to join the singing in the village alehouse and without, and in the dancing on the village green. Among the more popular and often printed of the tunes then used both as song and dance, was a melody entitled "Under the Greenwood Tree," but the natural inference that this tune was to Bunyan the familiar setting of Shakespeare's lyric seems to be open to some question.[13]

However that may be, the time soon came when Bunyan regarded the songs and dances of the alehouse and the green as carnal indulgences to be foregone, and he has himself told us of the real distress he felt in abandoning them for conscience sake. And I would suggest that if we set Bunyan's hymn against this background of his familiarity with the current "carnal songs" and his experience of their delight, we have the probable explanation of its motive and origin.

What seems to me most likely is that Bunyan knew Amyens' call to "come hither and lie in the sun," shunning all ambition to forge ahead and freed of all enemies except winter weather—knew its popularity and charm, and disapproved of it very heartily; and that he essayed to rebut it with a call to come hither and be a pilgrim and fight the foes of the pilgrim life,

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[12]Many English folk songs date from Bunyan's time.

[13]Mr. Louis C. Elson in his popular *Shakespeare in Music* (Boston, v.d., pp. 60-63) prints the tune "Under the Greenwood Tree" as the oldest setting of Amyens' Song (the words of which he runs through the braces), "very popular in the seventeenth century and very probably used by Shakespeare." But Mr. Elson has, as he says, copied the song from *A Collection of National English Airs*, edited by W. Chappell, and published in London in 1838 and 1840. Chappell, it is true, prints the tune "Under the Greenwood Tree" as No. LXI in his 1840 volume, with the words of Amyens' song set to it, but in the 1838 volume, which contains his "Remarks on the Tunes," he says (page 21) that owing to the great vogue of the tune and to the similarity of the titles he was led to suppose it to be that to which Shakespeare's words were sung, but he now thinks that a song in D'Urfey's *Pills to purge Melancholy*, called "The Countryman's Delight," "appears to be the original." This raises difficulties. Did Chappell still think so when he printed Shakespeare's words to this tune in his second volume, apparently two years later? And if, as he says, he made no changes in the air of any tune, how could this air be used with "The Countryman's Delight," which is in a different metre,—

("In Summertime, when Flowers do Spring,
And birds sit on a Tree,")

and has its own proper tune in D'Urfey? The song, however, does contain the line, "Under the Greenwood Tree."

I have read Chappell's note many time without resolving these difficulties.

that should not be literally a parody of the "carnal song" but should suggest it by vivid contrasts of matter presented through intended likeness of manner.

If this be so, Bunyan's motive was at one with that of the writers and compilers of the collection of metrical versions of Psalms bound up with current Bibles and Prayer Books, that were offered (as the title page of *The Whole booke of Psalmes* read) "for godly solace and comfort, laying apart all ungodly songs and ballads, which tend onely to the nourishing of vice and corrupting of youth."

But in method Valiant's Song was nearest akin not to the current Psalm versions, but to the earlier ballads of the Scottish Reformation, as gathered in *The Gude and Godlie Ballates* of the Wedderburne brothers, which spiritualized current "fleshly songs," while retaining much of their phrasing, such as

"Quho is at my windo, quho, quho?
Go from my windo, go, go.
Quha callis thair, sa like a straingair?
Go from my windo, go!" . . . .

"With huntis vp, with huntis vp,
It is now perfite day,
Jesus, our King, is gane in hunting,
Quha lykis to speid thay may." . . .

"Hay now, the day dallis,
Now Christ on vs callis,
Now welth on our wallis,
Apperis anone:
Now the word of God regnis,
Quhilk is King of all kingis
Now Christis flock singis,
The nicht is neir gone." . . .

It remains to consider the text of Bunyan's song from the point of view simply of its acceptability for use as a church hymn.

Its discoverer, Paxton Hood, in 1862, made only two slight changes (other than the inevitable amelioration of the punctuation), which are no improvement and read as though they

might be slips of a copyist's pen. Its restorer, *The English Hymnal* of 1906, made so many that they almost amount to a reconstruction:

"He who would valiant be
    'Gainst all disaster
Let him in constancy
    Follow the Master.
There's no discouragement
Shall make him once relent
His first avowed intent
    To be a pilgrim.

"Who so beset him round
    With dismal stories,
Do but themselves confound—
    His strength the more is.
No foes shall stay his might,
Though he with giants fight;
He will make good his right
    To be a pilgrim.

"Since, Lord, Thou dost defend
    Us with Thy Spirit,
We know we at the end
    Shall life inherit.
Then fancies flee away!
I'll fear not what men say,
I'll labour night and day
    To be a pilgrim."

No doubt it was a little daring to propose for Anglican use so unconventional a hymn as Bunyan's, but when you have stripped it of its rude vigor and quaint charm, was the dare worth while? And yet this conventionalized text was followed in that least conventional of hymnals, *Songs of Praise* (London, 1925).

On the other hand, Bunyan's text is followed literally in *The Oxford Hymn Book* (1908), *The University* (of Toronto) *Hymn Book* (1912), *The Congregational Hymnary* (London, 1916), *School Worship* (London, 1926), and *The Church Hymn-*

ary (Revised edition, London, 1927). *A Students' Hymnal* (London, 1927) prints Bunyan's first stanza across the page, followed by the original and the English Hymnal text of stanzas two and three in double columns for alternative use.

To my mind the crux of the original text is the line "Hobgoblin, nor foul Fiend." It is so stuttery in the mouth and perhaps calculated to raise a laugh from many of those in our congregations. In *Christian Song* (wisely or unwisely) I changed it to read, "No goblin nor foul fiend." Personally I prefer the original.

The list of hymnals above given shows how rapidly Valiant's Song has found a place in the outstanding English hymnals appearing in the last quarter century, and preferably in the original text. Our American hymnals are as a rule less hospitable, and perhaps reflect the reluctance to learn anything new that has fallen upon so many of our respectable congregations. But the song is found in *The Riverdale Hymnal* (1912), *The New Hymnal* of the Protestant Episcopal Church (1916), Mrs. Date's *Hymns for Worship* (1927), and Augustine Smith's spicy *The American Student Hymnal* (1928). All four books have used the conventionalized text of *The English Hymnal* instead of Bunyan's own. This, it seems to me, is a great pity. It is easy to understand why these changes of text were proposed. The original is not a song of praise or a hymn of edification but a spiritual challenge delivered dramatically: and like most challenges it carries an implication of boastfulness. *The English Hymnal* text does get rid of that effectively, but it does so at the cost of turning the dramatic monologue of Valiant into a descriptive eulogy of valour, much after the manner of the first Psalm.

It is at all events not worth while to go into the matter of a suitable tune for Bunyan's hymn until we have made up our minds whether we want a setting of a dramatic challenge or of a descriptive eulogy.

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CARL F. PRICE *Editor*

II

THE RELIGIOUS VALUE of HYMNS

by

WILLIAM P. MERRILL, D.D.

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The Religious Value of Hymns

This service is in loving and grateful memory of a good servant of God, who faithfully fulfilled the beautiful ideal of the text.

It is doubtful if many here, outside of the membership of the Hymn Society, know anything of Doctor Louis F. Benson. But most of us are richer for the work he did in the interests of beauty and dignity in worship, particularly in the use of hymns. During the last three or four decades there has come a vast improvement in the quality and value of the hymns and tunes used in the worship of the church. While new hymnals come from the press in bewildering numbers, there is slowly emerging a standard by which all may be judged. We find less of individual caprice, and more steady approval of the best, in the preparation of these aids to worship. In the development of this higher and better standard Doctor Benson had a large influence. He was really a pioneer in this work of providing better hymnals for our American churches.

It was my privilege to know him, and, in a very small way, to be associated with him, when he was preparing the Presbyterian *Hymnal*, which has been of large and continuing service to the churches. I know what pains he bestowed upon that work, and what eager and constant enthusiasm he felt for it. He was as keen in hunting hymns, their sources, history and uses, as any Englishman in hunting tigers, or as Livingstone in exploring Africa. And he was as careful as he was keen. Nor did he make the mistake, into which so many compilers fall, of issuing a hymnal technically sound, but over the heads, and beyond the practical uses, of ordinary congregations. He was mindful of that sound bit of exegesis, "The Lord said, 'Feed my lambs,' not 'Feed my giraffes.' " Yet he never tolerated the cheap or unworthy. The book he prepared was one of the first and best of the new order of standard and reliable Christian song-books.

He wrote hymns of beauty and worth. We are singing some of them at this service. He was too modest to make very much use of them in the hymnals he edited. But we may be sure that some of them will live in the growing affection of Christian people.

Our *Book of Common Worship* also has upon it the touch of Doctor Benson's fine taste and judgment. Some of its best parts are from his hand and mind and soul. Many of us ministers know more about hymns, and lead public worship more helpfully, because of the enlightenment and inspiration caught from the writings and the personal influence of this lover of the praise of God. It is very certain that music is to have an ever-increasing place in the worship and life of the Church of Christ. We are glad to honor in this simple way a leader in that cause, and to welcome to this service the fellowship of lovers of good songs known as the Hymn Society, which, in quiet but effective ways, is doing much to further the study and love of good hymns and tunes in the worship of the church.

But we are here for something more than to honor this good servant of the God of beauty and harmony, and to welcome his companions in the service of better praise. We are here for an object that blends readily with the thought of Doctor Benson and his life-work. For we are to give a thought to the value of hymns as a means of *keeping fit religiously*.

On the last two Sunday afternoons we have thought about the Bible and Prayer, as two of the indispensable means of keeping up a true and strong religious experience. It is not an easy matter just now to maintain a wholesome, strong, vigorous personal religion. We cannot afford to neglect any good means to that end. Here in sacred songs, in the knowledge and use of good and true hymns, we have a wonderful help to that end.

A good Scotch elder whom I knew and loved many years ago once came to me with a troubled heart and conscience. He told me he had a confession to make. It was this,—that he found more comfort in hymns than in the reading of the Bible: that it helped his soul more, comforted him more in sorrow, gave him greater strength to resist temptation, brought him more vividly the sense of communion with God, to read or repeat some great hymn, than to read his Bible. Was he wrong? Was it a sin? It was a joy to relieve that Scotch conscience of his with a clear and strong judgment that he was right in the matter. Some people, I remember saying to him, find a loveliness and appeal in the moonlight which they never find in the full blaze of the sun. "Fair is the sunshine,

fairer still the moonlight." Even if we look on the Bible as the unique Word of God, its beauty may be more wonderful and appealing to us when reflected from the souls and in the words of sensitive poets. I reminded him how practically every helpful hymn is based on thoughts or images from the Bible. Jacob's experience at Bethel takes hold of us more powerfully in "Nearer, my God, to Thee," than in the story of Genesis. Habakkuk is a sealed book to many who love to sing its message in the last stanza of Cowper's "Sometimes a light surprises the Christian while he sings." The "Sanctus" that Isaiah heard takes on a new glory when Gounod sets it to music, or when Heber gives it lyrical form in the hymn, "Holy, holy, holy." What is the hymnal but a poetic and musical commentary on the Bible?

There are many of us who are quite one with the Scotch elder in finding in the hymns something more appealing and more immediately helpful than much of what we find in the Bible itself. For one thing, the form helps greatly. It is a comfort and a joy to sing our thoughts of God. The lyric stays in the memory as the noblest prose cannot.

Amid all the changes that have come and are coming in the outward forms of religion, one wonders whether the use of hymns in private and personal religion is diminishing. Do the young people know the hymns as former generations did? Such evidence as I find makes me hopeful. Yet I am very sure that there might well be far larger use of the hymnal than now obtains.

In almost any church there would come a real and marked revival of spiritual life and of interest in worship, if every family connected with the church should secure a copy of the hymnal there used for home and personal uses; and if all who come there for worship should read and study and sing the hymns at home. Out of that familiarity would come a far more satisfactory offering of praise to God in the sanctuary.

And something more would come from it. For such private and family use of the hymnal would give to all in the home an inward treasure that would last through the years, and prove an invaluable help to the living of a faithful Christian life. Few things are better than to have a mind and heart stored with the best hymns. Out of such a treasure-house come unexpected aids in times of need.

There is much for which I give thanks as I remember the home of my childhood in New England. But one of the most vivid and loved memories is of the Sunday evenings when we would sit and sing as the daylight died away. We sang some strange hymns, crude, quite out of touch with modern taste and feeling. Yet the memory even of those is sweet. I never read or think of David's combat with Goliath, without recalling how my father loved the stirring song which began, "Strike the cymbal," and went on to describe how

"From the river,
Rejected quiver,
Judah's hero takes the stone;
Spread your banners,
Shout hosannas;
The battle is the Lord's alone."

Probably nowhere but in New England would "banners" be set to rhyme with "hosannas"; but there it did not seem incongruous. And I can recall the thrill that came as we sang of that conflict in which right won against might through the power of the Unseen God.

But, while some of the hymns we sang were thus uncouth and unworthy, and have rightly passed to oblivion, more of them were gems that are still of undiminished value. I can never come upon that beautiful prayer, "Father, whate'er of earthly bliss," without seeing our room with all the family gathered together and singing together. For that was one of the few hymns we sang every Sunday evening. I recall how the first gospel hymns caught us and excited us. I remember vividly the first time we came upon the hymn, "Holy, holy, holy," to Dykes's tune. I can still feel the thrill of joy its beauty roused. I remember the first time I ever heard "Now the day is over," to Barnby's setting. It seemed as if heaven itself could hold nothing more lovely.

I wonder how many homes are thus using sacred song as a simple and potent means of grace. Those that are not are missing a rare privilege and help. I was glad to hear, only a few days ago, from a friend who ministers to a church which broadcasts its services, that the bookseller in the town told him that he has sold 1800 copies of the hymnal in use in that church, for people to use in their homes in connection with the radio services. I am very sure, from facts known to me,

that young people still love to sing hymns; and any home will be the richer and purer for keeping up that simple practice.

But that is not all. The hymns are of great and effective value in one's private and personal life. I know, from statements made to me by men and women who have come to me for confession and counsel, how potent may be the influence for goodness, for purity, for godliness, of a hymn kept in mind, ready for instant use. One of the best men I have ever known told me once of the struggle he had had for many years with the surging up of unclean thoughts and images in his soul. They would rise without warning and overwhelm him. He said that the greatest help he found was to start singing, and keep singing over and over, the old hymn, "The Lord is my Shepherd; no want shall I know," to the tune of the folk song, "Forsaken." He said, "If ever I get to heaven, and am free from sin, I shall number that hymn among my eternal treasures." Another, who was troubled with sleepless hours, when worries of the day and thoughts of all kinds would surge through his mind and keep him awake and restless, said that he had found far more effective than counting sheep, or any other familiar device, the slow repetition over and over of the stanza,

> "Drop Thy still dews of quietness,
> Till all our strivings cease.
> Take from our souls the strain and stress,
> And let our ordered lives confess
> The beauty of Thy peace."

I know that others would say with truth that, at times of stress and anxiety, no relief or help has meant quite so much as to get into the company of the great hymns, to play them over, to repeat them, to read them.

Friends, here is a real means of grace. You can do your inner life no better service than to know the hymns, and to use them right along with the Bible and prayer. Most of the hymns are prayers; and the rest are meditations, if they are true hymns. Great souls have voiced their deepest and highest emotions and thoughts in these hymns. A hymnal is a distillation of the precious essence of the souls of the saints.

It was in part because Doctor Benson realized the value of this use of the hymnal, in the religious experience of the individual and the home, that he stood so consistently and so

strongly for the printing of the hymns apart from the music, rather than between the clefs of the tune. He wanted the hymnal to be a treasury of devotion. He was right. The hymnal should be not merely an aid to public worship, but also a help to private devotion and life.

If you are not making full use of the hymns to that end, I commend the practice to you as one you cannot afford to neglect. There are hymns of such power and grace that, once they get into your soul and are really known there, they will lift you over hard places, carry you safely past temptations, give wings to your praying, bring comfort and joy in hours of sorrow, and open the doors of your heart that Christ may come in and dwell there. Unless you are far above the average Christian in your spiritual sensitiveness and attainments, naturally pure and good, unselfish and godly, you need all the help you can find to live the life you know God wants you to live. Here at your hand is a precious aid, through which the souls of the saints lay hold on your soul to help you climb and keep you climbing. Thank God for such a gift! Let it have its full power and do its full work in your soul.

This sermon was delivered by Doctor Merrill at the service, held in memory of the late Louis Fitzgerald Benson, D.D., under the auspices of the Hymn Society in the Brick Presbyterian Church, New York city, on Sunday afternoon, January 18, 1931. His text was:

Colossians 3,16 (Moffatt translation):
"Teach and train one another with the music of psalms, with hymns, and songs of the spiritual life; praise God with thankful heart."

THE PAPERS OF THE
HYMN SOCIETY

CARL F. PRICE *Editor*

III

THE PRAISE OF THE VIRGIN IN EARLY LATIN HYMNS

by

RUTH ELLIS MESSENGER, PH.D.

THE HYMN SOCIETY OF AMERICA
NEW YORK CITY

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The Praise of the Virgin in Early Latin Hymns

There never was a time in the history of the Christian Church when the hearts of the people were not raised to heaven in song. At first in Palestine, then in Greek-speaking lands, might have been heard the never-ceasing pæans, which day by day gave expression to the loyalty and religious fervor of primitive Christianity. Attractive as the study of the Eastern hymns may be, the main stream of Christian hymnology did not flow in that direction but was diverted to western channels as the center of Christian thought and influence shifted to the Latin-speaking world. Here in Italy, Spain and Gaul, the first writers of the great Latin hymns appeared. Originating in the fourth century, the collections increased in number, variety and usage, until the ninth century possessed the full cycle of hymns which had been made a part of the formal services of the Church, a cycle which was destined to survive for centuries as the nucleus of Catholic hymnals up to the present day.

One of the most convenient printed collections of this group of hymns which is available to-day is that of the late A. S. Walpole, an English hymnologist. It contains 129 hymns which appear in the service books of the early mediæval monasteries, since monastic rites established in the sixth century were the means by which the early hymns in general use were selected, conserved and augmented for the future benefit of the Church. The Walpole edition of *Early Latin Hymns* has, therefore, been chosen to provide the hymns which are now to be considered.[1]

When the early fathers of Christianity contemplated the life and mission of our Lord, their thoughts were naturally centered upon his nativity, crucifixion and resurrection. In hymns the narrative element became prominent, the desire to tell a story in simple and objective form. To-day our Christian hymns are characterized by a subjective element and by the expression of social ideals which a modern age has exalted.

[1] A. S. Walpole, *Early Latin Hymns* (Cambridge, 1922).

In the early centuries, however, the three immortal themes of the nativity, crucifixion and resurrection were paramount in hymnology. The first of these called to mind the Virgin Mother. Every hymn, therefore, which recounts the chief events in the life of Jesus, or more particularly the incidents connected with his birth, is redolent with her praise. The poems of Saint Ambrose, the great bishop of Milan, offer an excellent illustration of her veneration in fourth century hymns. "Come, Thou Redeemer of the world, show forth the virgin birth. Every age marvels; such a birth befits our God." Continuing, Saint Ambrose proclaims that the word of God is made flesh by the power of the Holy Spirit, and that the inviolate purity of the Virgin is the sign of the presence of God within her, just as a flag over some royal palace might signify the presence of the prince.[2] A second hymn by the same writer, which commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus, includes mention of that incident where the Son commends his mother to the care of Saint John. Saint Ambrose thinks of her simply as the Virgin Mother, with no hint of that later theme which was destined to grow out of the same scene and develop into the praises of the *Mater Dolorosa* standing by the cross.[3]

In a third hymn, upon the Epiphany theme, Saint Ambrose says that "the star, shining in the heavens, pointed out the virgin birth."[4] Here and in the preceding citation we have but a passing reference. Saint Ambrose has another treasure to offer, "Jesus, Thou crown of virgins, whom that mother brought forth, who was the only Virgin thus to bear a child, mercifully receive these vows." The hymn is a counterpart in poetical form of his *De Virginibus*, a prose work addressed to his sister Marcellina. Dedication to the ascetic life on the part of holy virgins was becoming a common practice in his day. He, therefore, advocated it for his sister, exalting both in essay and hymn the Virgin Mother as the inspiration to the virgin life.[5]

There are at least two implications in the use made by Saint Ambrose of the Virgin theme, which are intensely interesting to the student of early Christian thought. The former

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[2] *Intende qui regis Israel*, stanzas 2, 3, 4.
[3] *Iam surgit hora tertia*, stanzas 5, 6.
[4] *Inluminans altissimus*, stanza 3.
[5] *Jesu, corona virginum*, especially stanza 1.

is the direct reflection of the veneration of the Virgin Mary which began to be so prominent in the fourth century, in the exact forms which it took in expressions of devotion outside of hymnology. The personages of the New Testament narrative, who surrounded our Lord during his lifetime, were for the most part honored with a martyr's crown. Not so the Virgin Mother. Consequently the veneration, offered by the early Church to the great martyr founders, overshadowed the honors given to those saints of whom such a sacrifice was not demanded. Slowly the claims to virtue displayed in a consecrated life, as well as a consecrated death, began to be recognized by the Church, which added to the martyr group the ascetic group, as objects of veneration. With the latter, the Virgin came into her inheritance of devotion. It was during the fourth century, also, that the Nicene Creed crystallized orthodox belief. The definition by the Council of Nicæa, 325 A.D., of the Godhead of the Son was to a degree paralleled by a corresponding recognition of his mother. This was achieved, 431 A.D., at the Council of Ephesus, when the Nestorian controversy resulted in the official sanction of the term "Mother of God," as applied to the Virgin. In fact, those who denied her the appellation were declared heretical.[6] No wonder that orthodox hymn writers tried to express their idea of the purity requisite to such a mother, and at the same time endeavored to uphold her as the inspiration of the ascetic life.[7]

The second characteristic of the Ambrosian hymns, which calls for notice, is the absence of pagan ideas in references to the Virgin. There are those who would seek for the origin of many elements of Christian belief and worship in aspects of Greek, Roman and oriental cults. Saint Ambrose, of course, shared the thought of his time. Indeed, he was a leading agent in assimilating the best of the ethical ideals of paganism

[6] For the Council of Ephesus, *vide* Article *Ephesus, IV, Lexicon für Theologie und Kirche*, 2nd Ed. (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1931); G. Krüger, *Handbuch der Kirchengeschichte* (Tübingen, 1923), I, p. 171; F. J. Foakes Jackson, *History of the Christian Church from the Earliest Times to 461* (Cambridge, 1914), p. 458 *et seq.*

The Abbé Duchesne has explained the precise meaning of the expression, "Mother of God," thus: "*L'expression 'Mère de Dieu' n'est orthodoxe que si on l'entend de Dieu-personne; entendue de Dieu-nature elle est plus qu'heretique, elle est absurde. Marie, selon la tradition orthodoxe, est mère de quelqu'un qui est Dieu; elle est sa mère, non qu'il lui doive sa divinité, mais parce qu'il a pris d'elle son humanité.*" L. Duchesne, *Histoire ancienne de l'Eglise*, III (Paris, 1910), p. 325.

[7] *Vide* J. P. Kirsch, *Doctrine of the Communion of Saints* (Edinburgh, 1910), p. 236 *et seq.*

to Christian theology. Other hymns of his are reminiscent of pre-Christian ideas. Aurora, for instance, is still the dawn.[8]

A throng of demon powers infest the night time and are dispersed by the crowing cock.[9] But all that is said by Saint Ambrose about the Virgin is strictly biblical in its derivation.

Other writers of the fourth century are no less ardent than he in their expression of the Virgin's supremacy. One tells of Gabriel's message (perhaps it was Hilary of Poitiers), and adds, "We are taught to believe a new marvel, not seen before, a Virgin Mother."[10] Prudentius, the noted Christian poet of Spain, enters into the full spirit of the theme. He produced two important works, the *Cathemerinon*, a collection of twelve sacred poems for daily private devotion, and the *Peristephanon*, containing fourteen poems honoring certain martyrs, for a similar purpose. In the former work, as he narrates the story of the life of Jesus, he declares that the Virgin "has given birth to our salvation" and reminds the worshiper that her Son is the "Redeemer of the world."[11] In true harmony with all Christians of his day he must needs exalt the mother with the Son. Again, he says, "O Nazarene, light of Bethlehem, word of the Father, born of a Virgin," choosing his phrases with the same significance.[12]

A Nativity hymn by Sedulius, however, is perhaps the best known of all fourth-century verses on this subject. "From the place of sunrise" was sometimes divided into two parts, the first seven stanzas being used at Nativity. Translated and retranslated, it has served the Church for centuries. The first stanza contains the phrase, "born of the Virgin Mary," the third portrays her as the recipient of celestial grace, while the fourth declares that "the dwelling-place of her pure breast is suddenly made the temple of God."[13]

Virgin hymns suggest the Virgin feasts. For information regarding the festivals of this early period we must once more

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[8] *Splendor paternae gloriae*, stanza 8.
[9] *Aeterne rerum conditor*, stanza 3.
[10] *Hymnum dicat turba fratrum*, lines 11–13.
[11] *Corde natus ex parentis*, stanza 4.
[12] *O Nazarene, lux Bethlem*, lines 1, 2.
For an account of Prudentius, *vide* F. J. E. Raby, *A History of Christian Latin Poetry* (Oxford, 1927).
[13] *A solis ortus cardine.*

turn our thoughts to the east, where in Jerusalem the Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple is first noted in the second half of the fourth century. Later the name, Purification of the Blessed Virgin, was used for the same feast in the west. We first hear of the Feast of the Annunciation early in the seventh century and, at the same period, that of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin and the *Dormitio* or *Falling Asleep*, in commemoration of her death. The name *Transitus Mariae* is also used for the same feast to which legend in the fourth century, probably from Syria, had added the story of her translation to heaven. Up to the fifteenth century these names were still in use, but in modern times the name Assumption has been exclusively employed.[14] All the above festivals were unknown in Rome before the seventh century, although, as in the case of the *Dormitio*, they had flourished earlier in the Byzantine Church. At the beginning of the eighth century they are recorded in the Gelasian Sacramentary, showing that they had found meanwhile a place in the favor of the Western Church. Indeed, they were destined to be included among her choice possessions.[15]

One reason for the increased interest in the Virgin feasts, from the fourth century on, was undoubtedly the New Testament apocryphal literature which narrated the story of the Virgin's life, filling in many gaps left by the canonical accounts.[16] It is now easier to understand why the Latin hymns of the fourth century, which were written before the new influences had had time to be felt, tell only the simple narrative of the life of Jesus and contain merely the reflection of the Virgin's praise in its earliest form.

The hymns of Venantius Fortunatus, bishop of Poitiers, are the next great compositions to be considered, appearing in the sixth century in Gaul. His magnificent hymn for the Holy Cross, "Sing, my tongue, the glorious battle," is so well known that one has only to remind the reader that the ancient themes of the virgin birth and the Virgin Mother occur in its fourth and fifth stanzas.[17] Fortunatus wrote a Christmas hymn also.

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[14] G. Krüger, *Handbuch der Kirchengeschichte*, III, pp. 221, 238. F. Cabrol, "Assomption (Fête de l')" in *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie chrétienne et de Liturgie.*

[15] *Vide* L. Duchesne, *Christian Worship* (London, 1904), pp. 271–273.

[16] P. E. Lucius, *Die Anfänge des Heiligenkults* (Tübingen, 1904), p. 422.

[17] *Pange lingua, gloriosi proelium certaminis.*

Phrases rendered familiar by later usage are gathered here. The prophecy of Isaiah, the annunciation, the work of the Spirit, a mighty power filling all the universe yet submitting to the restrictions of an infant's life, the rod of Jesse and the concept of One who with his Father created the heavens, wearing swaddling clothes under a mother's care, all appear. The final stanza brings the virgin theme to a climax: "Now is light and salvation born. Night has been driven away and death has been conquered. Come, ye tribes, believe! Mary has brought forth God."[18]

One of the first Latin hymns to be devoted to the exclusive praise of the Virgin is also attributed to Fortunatus. The poet has permitted himself a wider range of tributes than in any previous hymn. Terms such as *beata, benedicta* and *gloriosa* are found. The contrast between the parts played by Eve and Mary in the drama of man's salvation, a favorite idea with later mediæval writers, is made clear. The Virgin is, moreover, called "the window of heaven," "the doorway for the king," "the gate of light."[19] It seems remarkable that a hymn of the sixth century should reveal so complete an assimilation of the ideas of Eastern Christianity, even before the Virgin feasts had reached Rome. If, however, Fortunatus is in reality the author, it may illustrate the Gallic tendency toward earlier adoption of ideas prevailing in those lands in which our Christian religion arose. Much has yet to be revealed in the history of Gallic Latin hymns; but whatever stands out from the general obscurity, which surrounds their development, points to an earlier and more varied use of song in the services of worship, and an interest in devotional poetry which surpassed that of Italy, with the possible exception of Milan.

Like the fourth century, the sixth and later the ninth centuries were notable periods in the growth of Latin hymnology. In the great hymn cycles, which were used chiefly in the services of the canonical hours, those terms are met continually

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[18] *Agnoscat omne saeculum.* Fortunatus, one of the most interesting literary figures of the sixth century, is the author of secular as well as religious verse. In addition to Raby's account in his *History of Christian Latin Poetry,* a very suggestive and stimulating criticism of the man and his work is available in P. S. Allen, *Romanesque Lyric* (Un. of N. Carolina Press, 1928).

[19] *Quem terra, pontus, aethera.*

which have become familiar in the praises of the mother of the Lord. The greater number of references are to the virgin birth, and the purity and fame of the Virgin Mother. Yet the praises of the Son which glorify the mother are present also, and that metaphor by which she is termed "the gate accessible to Christ."[20]

The ninth century cycle of monastic hymns did not include a well-loved poem which undoubtedly dates from that century, "Hail, Star of the Sea." It forms the link which connects the group of earlier hymns with those of a later period when the praises of the Virgin reached their climax in Latin song.

Ave, maris stella,
Dei mater alma
Atque semper virgo,
Felix coeli porta.

Sumens illud Ave
Gabrielis ore,
Funda nos in pace,
Mutans nomen Evae.

Solve vincla reis,
Profer lumen caecis,
Mala nostra pelle,
Bona cuncta posce.

Monstra te esse matrem,
Sumat per te precem,
Qui pro nobis natus
Tulit esse tuus.

Virgo singularis,
Inter omnes mitis,
Nos culpis solutos
Mites fac et castos.

Vitam praesta puram,
Iter para tutum,
Ut videntes Iesum
Semper collaetemur.

Sit laus Deo patri,
Summum Christo decus,
Spiritui sancto,
Honor, tribus unus.[21]

The literary beauty and devotional spirit of this hymn are accessible to all in many translations. The following is one of two, recently selected by Father Britt for his *Hymns of the Breviary and Missal.*[22] It is here printed by the courtesy of the author, Rev. George R. Woodward, M.A.

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[20] *Aeterna caeli gloria,* stanza 1; *Conditor alme siderum,* line 12; *Christe redemptor omnium,* line 11; *Inluxit orbi iam dies,* line 22; *O redemptor sume carmen,* line 14; *Optatus votis omnibus,* line 18; *Hymnum canamus gloriae,* line 11; *Fit porta Christi pervia,* stanza 1.

[21] Text from *Anal. Hymn.,* LI, p. 140.

[22] M. Britt, *Hymns of the Breviary and Missal* (New York, 1924), p. 317 *et seq.*

Hail! Sea-star we name thee,
Ever-maid acclaim thee,
Godès Mother, portal
Up to bliss immortal.

Ave was the token
By the Angel spoken:
Peace on earth it telleth,
Eva's name re-spelleth.

Free the worldly-minded:
Luminate the blinded:
Every ill repressing,
Win us every blessing,

Plead, and play the mother:
He will, and none other,
Born for our salvation,
Heed thy supplication.

Maiden, meek and lowly,
Singularly holy,
Loose the sins that chain us;
Sanctify, constrain us.

Rule our life in pureness;
Smooth our way with sureness.
Jesus: O to eye him,
Like thee, alway nigh him!

Father, Son, we bless thee,
Likewise we confess thee,
Holy Spirit, trinal,
Onely, first and final.[23]

This beautiful hymn is typical of the early centuries, in that familiar words are present, such as "Mother of God," "gate of heaven," and "*Ave*," the reversed spelling of which reads "*Eva*." Moreover, the Virgin is thought of as the inspiration to a life of purity. A new note, characteristic of the future, is also heard. The mother is implored to use for mortals her great influence with the Son.

One of the striking features of this hymn is the direct address sustained from beginning to end. Fortunatus, it is true, appealed directly to the Virgin in the second part of his hymn in her honor, beginning with the line, *O gloriosa femina*, but this is a single instance from all the poems considered. The direct and personal approach in later hymns is almost universal.

It is difficult to overstate the charm and distinction of *Ave maris stella*. Its opening words suggest that atmosphere of unearthly beauty in which the evening star is seen against the blue depth of its luminous background. As early as the fourth century the name *stella maris* was used as the equivalent of *Mary*, but never had it been employed in hymns until this time.[24] Herein is another consideration linking past with

[23] G. R. Woodward, *The Mother of My Lord* (London, 1923), p. 11.

[24] O. Bardenhewer, *Der Name Maria* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1895), p. 88. For a discussion of similarities between epithets for Astarte and the term, *stella maris*, as applied to Mary, consult p. 36 of the above work.

future, for no term thereafter applied to the Virgin has been received with great favor.

Although this paper is, strictly speaking, concerned with hymns which belonged to services other than the mass, the hymnology of the latter cannot be altogether ignored. Toward the close of the period which ended in the ninth century, the mass was enriched by a new form of hymn, called the "sequence." The exact date of its appearance cannot be determined, nor do scholars now agree as to the authorship of important compositions once claimed as the work of individual poets, such as Notker of St. Gall. Setting these vexed questions aside we are, however, face to face with the same type of evidence seen in the office hymns. During the period of origin of the sequence, extant manuscript collections bear witness to the same ways of thinking, so prominent in the older established forms and now transferred to a new medium of religious verse.[25]

In terms like the above, Christian hymn writers from the fourth to the ninth centuries of our era were wont to think of the Virgin Mother. The period of the founding and expansion of Christianity had created a heritage everywhere familiar throughout the Roman Empire. Barbarian conquerors and Roman inhabitants had been merged into a new race which, in turn, assimilated the old ideas and expressions. Its creative powers had not yet fully matured, but here and there a leader appeared like Alcuin and his colleagues, precursors of that new day which was at hand. In the ninth century men stood like watchers before the dawn.

In spite of the simplicity and dignity of those terms of praise which were applied to the Virgin, some may regard them as meager, in the light of later hymns upon the same subject. If so, it should be recalled that the warmer and richer colors of daybreak had not yet flooded the sky. Saint Bernard had not yet been born. The Cistercian and other orders, whose delight it was to celebrate the glories of the Virgin, had not yet appeared. The later feasts had not yet been established. The Little Hours had not yet been observed. The more elaborate sequences for the Virgin masses had not yet been composed. We miss the exuberant piety which the veneration of

[25] *Vide Anal. Hymn.*, LIII, for sequences from manuscripts of the tenth century, especially Nos. 12, 15, 18, 22, 25, 26, 27.

the Virgin was yet to call forth. True of hymns, it is equally true of art. Émile Mâle, whose fascinating accounts of mediæval art captivate every reader, has called attention to the change which takes place in the representation of the Virgin in sculpture at the time when other forms of her praise were undergoing the development referred to above. He describes the Virgin sculptures before the twelfth century as "so serious" (*si grave*).[26] No better word could be found to express the essential quality and character of those praises penned by the early Latin poets. They are restrained, perhaps inarticulate, but intensely devotional. We have found them true to the thought of their times, but offering in the poetic medium a fresher and more direct expression of religious feeling than may be found in other forms of religious literature. The great Christian hymns of all ages have this characteristic. It is inherent in their very nature to reveal the common heritage of thought and devotion, like the face of waters which reflect what they behold in forms of more perfect beauty.

[26] *L'Art religieux du xiie Siècle en France* (Paris, 1922), p. 426.

THE PAPERS OF THE
HYMN SOCIETY

CARL F. PRICE *Editor*

IV

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE OLD FRENCH PSALTER

Begun by CLÉMENT MAROT *in 1532*

An Address before the Hymn Society at its Decennial Celebration at Union Theological Seminary, New York, November 12, 1932

by

PROFESSOR WALDO SELDEN PRATT, L.H.D., MUS. D.
Hartford Seminary Foundation

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The Significance of the Old French Psalter

Begun by CLÉMENT MAROT *in 1532*

My appearing before you to-night is in a sense accidental. It so happens that this tenth-year celebration of our Hymn Society coincides with the four-hundredth anniversary of an event which made such a society both possible and even inevitable. And it so happens that this far-off event and its many implications have long seemed to me of peculiar interest. The special field of this society is naturally the present picture or drama of hymnody as it lies close before us. But in every picture and drama the near foreground gains in depth and meaning as we also regard the backgrounds that lie behind. It is one of these almost forgotten backgrounds that is our topic to-night.

Happily, the subject is not unfamiliar here. Within but a few months you have had an address upon it from one who could speak out of a special intimacy with it.[1] But it spreads before us somewhat like a great forest. It has many aspects and wide expansions, with diverse paths that wind through it. So it will do no harm if to-night we try another entrance and pursue another course.

Toward the end of the year 1532—four hundred years ago—a popular and gifted poet attached to the royal court at Paris set himself to a project unlike any he had tried before, a project which he did not live to finish and one the results of which he did not at all foresee. What he then began and wrought upon for some ten years had sundry partial publications, and at length, being completed by another hand, reached its full and final form in 1562—just three hundred and seventy years ago.

The poet was Clément Marot, a bright star in the galaxy of

[1] By the Rev. M. J. Brun, assistant pastor of L'Église du Saint Esprit, New York City, on May 28, 1932.

wits and geniuses then clustered about the ambitious and energetic Francis I. The book that finally emerged was the complete metrical Psalter in French, richly supplied with tunes—a book that at once for Huguenots and later for hosts of others took rank in reverence as second only to the Bible itself. One third of this book came from Marot's own pen, while upon the whole lay the golden light of his fervor and inspiration.[2]

I

My main object to-night is to dwell on what this Psalter is within itself. But we can hardly avoid making first a sketch-plan of the situation into which it was born, together with some mention of the enormous range of its ultimate influence.

There was hardly a year in the amazing sixteenth century that might not well be commemorated now. It was packed with momentous events and movements—social, political, artistic, intellectual, religious. The rise of Protestantism was but one among a dozen convulsions that marked the transition from mediæval to modern times.

We cannot survey the whole scene. But we need to recall that the Protestantism of Western Europe started and continued notably separate from that of Central Europe. Its focus was long in Switzerland, where alone it was safe from hostile antipathy and violence. Its first leader was the ardent Zwingli, to whom succeeded in 1534 the still more powerful Calvin. Under the latter there gradually came into being the large circle of churches called Reformed or Calvinistic in distinction from those called Lutheran.

The story of the French Huguenots is at once romantic and

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[2] Two curious, and very dissimilar, observations may be added as to these dates 1532 and 1562:

First, regarding 1532. In that year there was in Paris also a young theological student named John Calvin—not yet a declared Protestant, as Marot certainly was not. During that year he may have preached his first sermon. He surely then published his first book. It was still four years before he and Marot were to meet in Italy, and ten years before they were to work hand in hand at Geneva over the growing Psalter.

And, regarding 1562. The completed Psalter was then issued by the royal printers under license from the king, who just then was Charles IX, a mere boy of twelve, so that the license actually came from his mother as regent, that same Catherine de' Medici who, after playing fast and loose with the Huguenots for ten years, became the instigator of the infamous Massacre of St. Bartholomew in 1572.

tragic. Long before they acquired their party name various scattered inquirers and dreamers were searching after a new faith and a new life. As they became united under Calvin's lead, their number and prestige steadily increased, so that they won some toleration and even power, though never for long or in full. Even when their ranks were counted by hundreds of thousands and included many noble and masterful names, they remained always a minority in the nation. Just before 1600 Henry IV, who had fought with them during a long period of civil war, signed the famous Edict that granted large freedom to the new religion. But this Edict was often disregarded, and in 1685 Louis XIV took the fatal step of revoking it. So, after one hundred and fifty years of activity and growth, the Huguenot population then had to choose between flight, recantation or death. Perhaps as many as 400,000 of the choicest spirits in France fled to other countries.

My chief reason for recalling these points is to emphasize the size and quality of the original public for which the French Psalter was designed and by which, through five generations before the Expulsion, it was held precious. The magnitude of this French circulation is otherwise attested. While still incomplete, nearly a hundred issues of parts of the Psalter are recorded. In the one year 1562 the completed work came out in about twenty-five editions in different cities. And before the Expulsion there were two hundred and fifty more. We can only guess how many copies these nearly four hundred printings imply. Whatever the total number, its meaning grows when we reflect that in those days only the few could use books at all. While some had the Psalter in their hands, many more held it simply in their heads and hearts.

Quite aside from this imposing French usage, much more is to be said. The contagion of Geneva spread far and wide. To the north it crept down the Rhine till it struck deep root in Holland, where presently Calvinism became the state or national religion. To the east it pushed steadily into many parts of Germany, where even lately its adherents were counted by millions. Across the Channel, about the time when Marot died, a valet at the court of England imitated his example by putting sundry psalms into English verse, thus taking the first steps toward the English Psalter. During the bloody reign of Mary (1553-58)

hosts of English Protestants took refuge at Frankfort or Geneva. At their return under Elizabeth they brought back new convictions and new practices, which helped to shape the then plastic Anglican Church and took control of the virile Church of Scotland. Thus to the west Geneva laid its hand on early Presbyterianism and Puritanism.

The point for us here is that everywhere the French Psalter flew like a flag at the head of aggressive Calvinism. In Holland Datheen's full translation, with all the tunes, became the official manual of the Dutch Reformed Church. In Germany Lobwasser's translation, again with the tunes, entered upon a popularity that ran strong for two centuries or more. In England, also, translations were promptly made, but were overshadowed by the English Psalter. But in this latter, as in the first Scottish Psalter, almost thirty per cent of the tunes were borrowed from the French, while in the later Psalter of Ainsworth—the one brought to Plymouth by the Pilgrims—one-half of the tunes were French.

But even this is not all. This French book of praise was in demand and use much beyond the three countries already named. The list of translations in full is almost unbelievable—into two dialects of Old French, into Swiss and Italian, into Danish, into Spanish and Portuguese, into Polish, Bohemian and Hungarian, even into Persian, Malay and two other tongues in the Far East, besides into Latin and Hebrew. Verily thus both verse and music may be said to have early gone to the ends of the earth.

Here in the early settlement of America every single band of pioneers, except the Spaniards in the south and the Jesuits in Canada, brought in print or in memory the whole of the French Psalter or parts of it. Indeed, even prior to St. Augustine (commonly called the first permanent settlement in America), a transient French colony in South Carolina sang Marot's Psalms so lustily that the Indians caught them up and kept them sounding long after the remnants of the colony were wiped out.[3]

In view of all this, my first point is that the significance of the French Psalter lies largely in the extraordinary range of its use and influence.

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[3] See Charles W. Baird's *History of the Huguenot Emigration to America*, i. 68.

II

Everyone knows that until after 1700 the substance of song in all the great circle of Reformed Churches was almost exclusively psalmody. Upon this and out of it was evolved the later hymnody that we know to-day. The French Psalter broke the first path into this unknown domain of song, its practice being adopted in full for French, Dutch and many German singers and followed in part by Scottish and English singers as well. Traces of its direct impress lingered in England and America as late as about 1800.[4] And, in the wonderful expansion of English hymn-writing in recent times, one of the notable features has been an instinctive return to many of the models and methods that were first set forth by French psalmodists in the sixteenth century. Verily, then, it was a sturdy and prolific seedling that Marot was moved to plant in 1532!

We turn back now to Marot, the creator of this remarkable historic sequence, whose career was more full of incident and color than we can here record.

His family was Norman, but he was born in 1495 or '97 at Cahors (sixty miles north of Toulouse).[5] His father, both a man of affairs and a poet, was long attached to the train of the famous Anne of Brittany, who was twice queen of France, and then to that of the king who succeeded in 1515, Francis I. The boy was naturally trained to be a courtier, then almost the only career open to a man of letters. He had discipline in various languages, in the rudiments of law, in the amenities and accomplishments of high society, and, incidentally, in some military service. His shining gift for poetry was early manifest and found incessant exercise. When he came of age, Francis had the wit to put him under the patronage of his sister, Marguerite of Alençon, who became his staunch and lifelong friend. But he was also much at Paris, a favorite with the whole court circle and at least a witness of its

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[4] Of course, many or all of the old psalms and tunes are in constant use now in French and Dutch Protestant churches everywhere. In a small circle of Dutch Reformed congregations in Michigan I believe that the revised edition of Datheen's translation is still the manual of praise.

[5] The family is traced back to the neighborhood of Caen under forms like Mares, Marais, Des Mares, Desmarets, etc. The spelling Marot was adopted by Clément's father. In America the derivation is shown by various well-known holders of the names Marot, Marais and Demarest. Two or three suppose themselves directly descended from Clément Marot through his son Michael, probably born in 1527. See Douen.

varied play of frivolity and intrigue. In this way he became an experienced man of the world.

But to have won and held his place implies a personality many-sided and strong. He was certainly keen and alert, vivacious and companionable, spirited and even audacious, but withal increasingly thoughtful within himself. His poetic writing was profuse and constant, ranging from light skits and pieces of occasion to veiled allegories and sharp satires on men and things, as well as long works of imagination and of sustained argument or polemic. His sympathies ran vigorously with all that made for progress—in knowledge, in culture, in justice, in liberty. He lost patience over the folly and moral laxness of the court and over the greed and tyranny of the Church. The clerical party came to fear and hate him for his daring sarcasm and his exposure of hypocrisy. I forget how often they schemed to silence him or put him in prison. But he always came back in a sort of triumph, until at last the Sorbonne branded him a heretic and forced him to flee for his life to Geneva. Even there his liberty-loving spirit soon set him adrift again. He betook himself to Italy and died suddenly at Turin in 1544, less than fifty years old—as some think, the victim of poison.

His turning from witty and diverting lyrics and from paraphrases of Greek and Latin odes and dithyrambs was not a mere freak or vagary. He had studied the New Testament before it was translated into French. Through all his mature writing, however light and impulsive, can be traced an evident groping after something deeper and more true. The goal toward which he was working is shown by his famous retort when accused of heresy,

> I am no Lutheran or Zwinglian, much less an Anabaptist or Papist. I never was, nor am, nor will be, anything but as Christian, I pass my days, God willing, in the service of His Son, Jesus Christ.[6]

In the annals of French lyric poetry Marot is sometimes counted as the natural successor of the erratic Villon, a half-century earlier. But his genius had a quality of reverence that

[6] In this quotation I take the liberty of combining Marot's two versions. At first he wrote only "Anabaptist;" later only "Papist." His evident intention was to disengage himself from all sects and parties, while declaring himself essentially Christian.

Villon never knew. He came at a time when the poetry of the Bible was just beginning to dawn upon the apprehension of the few. In 1532 he took up Hebrew that he might make the vision of the Eternal and Almighty in the psalms the inspiration and solace of the many.[7]

One would like to see a special study of the peculiar influence on Marot's development of three noble and gifted women who saw the potencies within him. These were Anne of Britanny (1476-1514), who watched him in his youth, Marguerite of Alençon (1492-1549), who for twenty-five years was his patroness and protector in his maturity, and Renée, Duchess of Ferrara (1510-74?), at whose court he first met Calvin and to whom he was probably going when struck down at Turin, this last being the only one of the three who openly espoused the new faith. These ladies, all of royal blood, lived in an age of extraordinary violence, luxury and profligacy. Yet, in the midst of it all, they stood out conspicuous for intellectual force, for broad and progressive sympathies, for some degree of moral and spiritual earnestness. Together they supplied both restraint and incitation as the impetuous Marot was evolving from the status of a mere court poet into that of the psalmist of the rising Reformed Church.

In all, Marot wrought out forty-nine psalms in meter, besides versions of the Ten Commandments and the Nunc Dimittis. He began with the first of the Penitentials (Psalm vi), which he appended to a letter to Marguerite. At first he published nothing, but circulated his new poems among friends at court. Thus arose a most curious situation. These psalms at once sprang into favor with the king and the whole gay circle about him (all professed Catholics, though not all paragons of virtue), actually driving out the ditties that had been the fashion. The melodies used were doubtless adapted or invented by Marot, who was expert in music. But at the same time these new songs crept outside and were caught up by humble groups of Protestants as songs of worship. Thus it was that, without Marot's connivance, thirteen of them came into print at Strassburg in 1539. It was not till 1542 that he himself published his first thirty psalms, carefully revised and bearing the royal license or *privilège*. It

[7]At least seven editions of Marot's *Œuvres* are listed in Saintsbury's article upon him in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

was this book which, though explicitly endorsed by Francis I as king and Charles V as emperor, aroused the wrath of the Sorbonne and finally put its author under sentence of death. Marot escaped to Geneva and there, with Calvin's approval, completed nineteen more psalms, the whole list appearing in 1543 as the official basis of a complete Psalter for the Reformed Churches.

But Marot's speedy death forced Calvin to find a new translator. He wisely turned to Théodore de Bèze (or Beza), twenty years younger than Marot, but a trained poet and theologian. Though Beza was no such genius as Marot, he excelled him in scholarship. He had a difficult task to supply the hundred psalms still lacking. But he deserves more honor than has always been accorded him for the fidelity and loyalty with which he completed the work in harmony with the spirit and method of the founder.

In sketching these facts you will see that I am suggesting my second point as to the significance of the French Psalter. This lies in the exceptional quality of its poetic text. No other official psalter matches it in variety, verve or sheer virtuosity. The English Psalter is tame and rude beside it. Even the Scottish, which aimed to follow it in part, is not its equal. Some of its renderings are open to question and sundry verbal expressions have needed alteration. But the massive warmth and dignity of the whole remain a marvel. I have not the skill nor is this the place to go into details.

But I must refer rapidly to certain features in the versification. Some of these are in contrast with early English usage, and all of them bear directly on the music.

All early Protestant verse was derived from popular models of song. The usual rhythm was iambic, the lines grouped into uniform stanzas by means of rhyme. The French Psalter is peculiar in its proportion of trochaic rhythms—over fourteen per cent—and its fondness for feminine endings everywhere.[8]

[8] In both French and English usage masculine and feminine rhymes are usually contrasted within the couplets, the one closing with a single accent, the other with a double accent (really on the penult, but made double by the melodic close of the line). Examples are

(Iambic) The King of love my Shepherd is,
Whose goodness faileth *never*,

(Trochaic) Glorious things of thee are *spoken*,
Zion, city of our God.

In English popular manuals neither of these found place until fully two hundred years later.

At first in all countries long stanzas were the rule, with correspondingly long melodies. In England and Scotland, the eight-line stanza was at first the favorite. But there the lazy seventeenth century lapsed into the so-called "short" stanza of four lines, while at the same time French and Dutch singers were ranging freely over every length from four lines to twelve.

Still more striking are the contrasts in stanza-plan or "meter." Early English verse centered almost wholly on Common Meter Double, with some variants.[9] But the French book has no less than one hundred and ten meters, each requiring its own type of tune. This richness of form, no doubt, traces back to Provençal or Troubadour originals. English official usage turned its back for long on all such devices as unpractical. Yet English poesy was not at all unable to match the French models, as was brilliantly shown by the Psalter of Philip Sidney and his sister, based upon Marot and Beza and completed by about 1590 (though not put in print till 1823). It remained for Charles Wesley in the eighteenth century and various poets of the early nineteenth to restore to English hymnody some of its lost features of metrical liberty, variety and vitality.

III

We come now to the tunes. These were the wings that bore the verses fast and far. While the text appealed only to those who knew French and was not readily translatable, the melodies could pass instantly anywhere. By their tunes all early psalms and hymns were not only spread abroad, but stamped upon the heart for generations. By their tunes ye shall *know* them!

The sixteenth century for music was a time of profound transformation. Its texture and method were being readjusted

[9] The syllable-plan for Common Meter is 8686 (the old "ballad meter"), for Long Meter 8888, for Short Meter 6686 (all these being often doubled to make eight lines) and for the so-called Hallelujah Meter 6666 4444. All were iambic. When French psalms were taken into English or Scottish usage the text and music were regularly modified in meter so as to avoid the feminine endings. A few French forms in ten-syllable lines were, however, accepted. Stanzas with such lines have been notably prominent in nineteenth century writing.

to secure effects and values that were novel. Historians do not always note how quickly Protestant song boldly leaped to that which scholastic artists reached more slowly and timidly. The first German hymn-book came out in 1524, the first French in 1539, the first effective English in 1551 (though not in England). In the tunes of all, interwoven with lingering traces of old ways, ran a sure sense of new ideas of rhythm and form, of melodic figure and balance, of tonality and harmony, that bring them close to our modern feeling. The key to it all was the discovery that in the song and dance of common people lay valid and vital artistic principles. Just these principles Protestantism was prompt to utilize.

In France, as elsewhere, the gathering of accepted melodies was gradual. What was used by Marot at first is not clear. In 1539 Calvin put in 29 tunes, of which only 11 became permanent. Half of the 25 added in 1542-3 were later dropped. More stable additions in the next twenty years brought the total to 125—a figure that is impressive in comparison with the 25 original in the English Psalter and the 50 or so in the Scottish.

We can do little here with the vexed question as to who adapted or composed these tunes. In 1541 two musicians came from Paris to Geneva, Guillaume Franc to open a singing school and Louis Bourgeois on invitation from the City Council. In 1545 Franc moved to Lausanne. Bourgeois remained until 1557, in close association with Calvin. Both men were busy over psalm-tunes. But Franc's work seems to have had little effect outside of Lausanne. So on the whole it is easier to call Bourgeois the probable designer of the style as a whole, the style to which the unknown final editor plainly sought to conform. By this word "style" I would not imply that the tunes are mechanically alike —which is far from true. But I mean that various details indicate a strong unifying purpose and plan. As a style, it stands apart from the German style on the one hand and from the English on the other.

Behind this French style, as with the others, lay a background of both Plain-song and Folk-song. Many melodies were doubtless borrowed or imitated, but some were freshly composed. All seem to have gone through some sort of editorial shaping. The style is not so much a creation as a genetic development. Its

prompt success implies a skillful fitting to the public of its day —a public certainly much more expert in unaccompanied song than is common now.

The great authority Douen (1878) divides the tunes into 52 modal, 35 imperfect minor and 38 major. Assuming that the minors can be assimilated to our present minor, this makes the ratio between antique and modern scales about 5:7. A few of his assignments seem to me open to debate. But everywhere we run up against the baffling problem of how far the practice of *musica ficta* is to be reckoned with. In most early music-printing no accidentals are marked. Yet we are practically sure that singers used tones not expressly given. This process of instinctive modification tended always toward the major and minor modes as we now have them, toward modern harmonic drifts and toward more or less modulation. As to the tendency in general there is little doubt. But particular cases can be wrangled over all night.

It is easy to see that these 125 tunes, with over 860 lines and about 7200 notes, present a critical problem of some magnitude. Of course, technical analysis cannot get at their full flavor. But study and comparison bring to light much that casual reading overlooks. Most of the detail is not at all suited to an address like this. But let me give but a single example.

Luther's *Ein' feste Burg* opens with a peculiar melodic device of three reiterated tones. In the French tunes this same device occurs over sixty times, though never built into Luther's phrase. It is commoner in modal or minor tunes, but in several of the majors the effect is notably fine. In the English tunes there are only eight cases and in the Scottish only eleven. In the French it is most telling when opening the second section of the tune and preceded by an octave leap.

Observing points like this leads, among other things, to what seems to be the most salient characteristic of these French melodies. This inheres in the metric pattern of the phrases or lines, that is, their framing out of long and short tones. With almost no exception, the lines are never made up of tones of equal value. Rather is there a constant and studied interplay of longs and shorts, amounting in all to nearly a hundred different patterns. Here is where we feel the vital heritage of folk-songs and

dances, with their elasticity, dash and spirit. This is the more impressive because so different from the English tradition as we know it. Just this it was that was derided by opponents at the start, but just that which a later taste finds choice. It was not only a fruit of the vivacious Gallic spirit. It was also so handled as to give utterance to the exuberant elevation of the ancient praise-book of Israel.

This metric feature is more than a rescript of popular song. It has been moulded into a system at once consistent and flexible. Fifteen to twenty patterns are the most frequent, fitted to every number of syllables from five to thirteen. It is astonishing how few of these patterns are found in current hymnals. About sixty or seventy years ago English tune-writing began to recover a little of the wealth of sixteenth century meters and patterns, as evidenced, for example, in Monk's "Abide with me" and Smart's setting of "Hark, hark my soul," which are in French form throughout.[10] We may hope that the twentieth century will go still further.

Associated with this matter of line-pattern there are two effects that seem unusual to us.

One is the occasional mingling within the phrase of duple and triple feet. Most of these hybrid phrases are not only very singable, but effective, though rare in modern tunes. It is amusing to note the efforts of certain editors to recast these phrases so to fit into some rigid formula that they think more normal.

More curious is the use to some extent of syncopated or upset accents in forming cadences. There are over forty cases of this effect, two-thirds of them with double syncopation. The device serves to emphasize the final note, and often suggests modulation. The noble tune "Toulon" in our modern hymnals, which, like "Old Hundredth," comes straight from the French Psalter, appears now as a four-line tune. Originally it had five lines, but the middle one was dropped because of its syncopated ending.

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[10] The first really skillful tune-writer in America was Lowell Mason, who had made diligent study of European models as far as then accessible. He was sensitive to this feature of line-pattern and experimented with many forms. It is curious that his rather favorite pattern (as shown, for example, in his "Rockingham") is identical with that found altogether about a hundred times in the French Psalter. Whether or not this striking innovation upon traditional English usage was based on a knowledge of its French source I do not know.

I wish that I could make due reference to the great dexterity with which different line-patterns are combined in the same stanza. A single pattern is never used for all the lines. Indeed, the style restricts itself to only two patterns in but seventeen cases. In eleven cases each line has a different pattern. The extent of variety in at least a hundred melodies can hardly be matched, I think, in modern hymnals.

In the manuals originally used the tunes are given in melody only, intended for tenor voices. But most of the melodies imply a harmonic basis, as shown by the formation of the phrases. This is made sure by the fact that in Germany, France and England harmonized versions appeared in print almost at once, and multiplied as time went on. In France the well-known Goudimel was one of the first in the field, his version being often republished. Not long after, the foremost organist in Holland, Jan Sweelinck, wrought out a full set of more elaborate treatments, in a way prefiguring the chorale works of Bach a century later. These are but two examples of the way in which professional musicians sought to disclose the harmonic substance behind the melodic profile or outline.

We may safely imagine, also, that among large groups of singers more or less improved part-singing developed spontaneously as in secular song. This is what we suspect as we read of 4000 people singing in the streets of Augsburg in 1551 or of 6000 around St. Paul's Cross in London in 1560, or of the Leyden congregation gathered to say farewell to the Pilgrims in 1620, and in many other cases. Early hymnody and psalmody was not simply melodic, but potentially and actually harmonic as well. This justifies us in various experiments in our own way to-day.

My own study has led me to feel that there is real beauty and worth in many of these old melodies; so much so that one wonders that more is not known of them among us to-day. Those in modal scales appeal to us less than the others, and the minors often raise problems of reading and treatment. But the majors tell their story at once. Only extended illustration and discussion would make clear just what is in my mind. I shall content myself with but a few simple examples on the piano. But I hope that these, meagre and imperfect though they be, will serve to

emphasize my third and final point—that the French Psalter is peculiarly significant for its rich and varied store of music.

My total argument, then, is that this Psalter of four hundred years ago has significance for us to-day for three reasons—first, because of its wide-extended influence in the age when a new faith and zeal were flaming fires; second, because of its fresh and virile transcriptions of the poetry of the Hebrew psalmists; and third, because of the noble and appealing vesture of melody that it gave to this poetry. For all these reasons, it seems fully worthy of the honor which our Hymn Society has done it in giving it place on the program of this Anniversary Celebration.

In preparing this address free use has been made of many books and articles, especially

Douen's masterly *Clément Marot et le Psautier Huguenot*, 2 vols, 1878

Bovet's shorter *Histoire du Psautier des Églises Réformées*, 1872

Livingston's monograph on *The Scottish Psalter*, 1864

Julian's *Dictionary of Hymnology*, 1892, 2nd ed. 1907

supplemented by an independent study of French, Dutch, English and Scottish Psalters in search of technical details in both verse and music to which not much attention has usually been paid.

Though differing much in scope and purpose, this address runs parallel at many points with three elaborate papers by the late Dr. Louis F. Benson in the *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society*, 1909.

Grateful acknowledgment is made for invaluable assistance from the Case Memorial Library of the Hartford Seminary Foundation and the Sage Library of the Reformed Church in America at New Brunswick, N. J., besides various individuals.

W. S. P.

THE PAPERS OF THE
HYMN SOCIETY

CARL F. PRICE *Editor*

V

HYMN FESTIVAL PROGRAMS

THE HYMN SOCIETY
NEW YORK CITY
1934

Forward

The hymn festivals, conducted in New York City during recent years under the auspices of the Hymn Society, have proved to be so inspiring in rendition, so well attended by the public and so fruitful in intellectual interest and spiritual power, that the Society has felt justified in urging that hymn festivals be held in many churches throughout the country. In this movement the Hymn Society has secured the pledge of hearty co-operation from the American Guild of Organists and the National Association of Organists. Special committees from each of these organizations have been meeting together to devise plans for its furtherance. The Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America through its Committee on Worship and Music has endorsed the movement.

The programs of some of these hymn festivals already held by the Hymn Society are here presented, as illustrations of the type of material which has proved successful. It is hoped, however, that as the festivals are developed, a larger place will be given to the congregational singing of hymns, without detracting from the interest and value that inhere in the rendition of meritorious organ compositions and anthems, based (for the most part) on well-known hymn tunes. An address on the hymns by the pastor or some visiting preacher has usually been made a part of the festival and has crowned the occasion with a helpful interpretation of its significance.

C. F. P.

Third Printing, 1960

Riverside Church, New York City

Sunday Afternoon, November 13, 1932

THE REV. DR. HARRY EMERSON FOSDICK, Pastor, officiating
DR. HAROLD V. MILLIKEN, Organist and Choirmaster

This hymn festival was held in connection with the Decennial of the Hymn Society.

ORGAN: Four Choral Preludes.....J. S. Bach
"Dearest Jesus, we are here"
"In dulci jubilo"
"My heart is filled with longing"
"We all believe in one God"

PROCESSIONAL HYMNS:
"God of our Fathers".....*National Hymn*
"Soldiers of Christ, arise".....*Diademata*

HYMN: "The Church's one Foundation".....*Aurelia*
(with descant by Grace Leeds Darnell)

ANTHEM: "Jesus, Joy of man's desiring".....J. S. Bach

LITANY by the Rev. Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick with the Choir
(written for this occasion)

OFFERTORY ANTHEM: Psalm 86, tune from Genevan Psalter, 1543.....Holst

HYMN: "Where cross the crowded ways of life".....*Germany*
(with descant composed for this service by T. Tertius Noble)

ADDRESS: "Vital Hymns" by the Rev. Professor James Moffatt

ANTHEM: "Lord, Thou hast been our refuge"
Vaughan Williams

VESPER HYMN: "O for a closer walk with God"....*Stracathro*
(Old Scottish Psalm Tune, arranged with Faux Bourdon by Hugh Roberton)

RECESSIONAL HYMN: "The land we love is calling"
All Hallows

BENEDICTION by the Rev. Dr. Frank Mason North

St. Bartholomew's Church, New York City

Monday Evening, November 14, 1932

THE REV. DR. CLIFTON MACON, Rector in charge, officiating
DR. DAVID MCKAY WILLIAMS, Organist and Choirmaster

In this festival service the Hymn Society united with the American Guild of Organists and the National Association of Organists.

ORGAN PRELUDE: "On the Tune, *Martyrdom*"
C. Hubert Parry

PROCESSIONAL HYMN: "Crown Him with many crowns"
Diademata

PSALM 91 ..... Anglican Chant

MAGNIFICAT IN E ..... Clark Whitfield

HYMN: "For all the saints" ..... *Sine Nomine*

ANTHEM: "All people that on earth do dwell" ..... J. S. Bach

SERMON by the Rev. Howard Chandler Robbins, D.D.
"The Function of the Hymn in Modern Worship"

ANTHEM: "Evening Hymn" ..... Balfour Gardiner

HYMN: "Sun of my soul, Thou Saviour dear" ..... *Hursley*

RECESSIONAL HYMN: "Saviour, again to Thy dear name"
Ellers

ORGAN POSTLUDE: "Fantasy on the Tune, *Ton-y-Botel*"
T. Tertius Noble

St. George's Church, New York City

Sunday Afternoon, April 30, 1933

THE REV. DR. KARL REILAND, Rector, officiating
GEORGE W. KEMMER, Organist and Choirmaster

CHORALE: "Liebster Jesu, wir sind hier" ..... Bach

HYMN: "O beautiful for spacious skies" ..... *Ely Cathedral*

OPENING SENTENCES AND LESSON

HYMN: "O God, our Help in ages past" ..... *St. Anne*

CHORALE: "O Saviour sweet" ..... Bach

VIOLIN: "Komm' susser Tod" ..... Bach-Tortis

CHORALE: "Awake and sing the song" ..... Wagner-Andrews

ANTHEM: "Turn back, O man" ..... Arranged by Holst
(melody, *Old 124th Psalm,* from Genevan Psalter)

ANTHEM: "Lord of the worlds above" .... Mrs. H. H. A. Beech
(introducing melody of *Ein' Feste Burg*)

HYMN: "While Thee I seek, Protecting Power" .... *Beatitudo*

ADDRESS by the Rector on "The Spiritual Power of Hymn Singing"

HYMN: "Breathe on me, Breath of God." ..... *Trentham*

RECESSIONAL HYMN: "Once to every man and nation"
Ton-y-Botel

Postlude musical numbers of violin. theremin and organ; the organ numbers being chorales, arranged by Bach:

Ein' Feste Burg ist unser Gott
Erbarm' dich mein, O Herre Gott
In dir ist Freude
Vater unser im Himmelreich

Thereminist, Mrs. Walter Rosen; Violinist, Edwin Ideler

Riverside Church, New York City

Sunday Afternoon, November 19, 1933

THE REV. DR. EUGENE C. CARDER, Associate Pastor, officiating
DR. HAROLD V. MILLIKEN, Organist and Choirmaster

ORGAN: "Fantasy on the Tune, *Ton-y-Botel*" T. Tertius Noble

PROCESSIONAL HYMNS:
"God of our fathers" ..... *National Hymn*
"Soldiers of Christ, arise" ..... *Diademata*

CALL TO WORSHIP

INVOCATION AND GENERAL THANKSGIVING

THE LORD'S PRAYER ..... Choral Chant

ANTHEM: "Swing low, sweet chariot" ..... Negro Spiritual
Arranged by Harry Burleigh

LITANY

HYMN: "The Church's one Foundation" ..... *Aurelia*

OFFERTORY: "Von Himmel Hoch" by Martin Luther
Karg-Elert
with violin obligato by Charles Lichter

HYMN: "Where cross the crowded ways of life" ..... *Gardiner*

CANTATA: "A Stronghold Sure" ..... J. S. Bach

PRAYER

VESPER HYMN: "O for a closer walk with God" ..... *Stracathro*

RECESSIONAL HYMN: "How firm a foundation"
Adeste Fideles

BENEDICTION

St. James' Church, New York City

Sunday Evening, March 11, 1934

THE REV. DR. H. W. B. DONEGAN, Rector, officiating
G. DARLINGTON RICHARDS, Organist and Choirmaster

ORGAN PRELUDE: "Chorale Prelude on *Rockingham*"
C. Hubert H. Parry

PROCESSIONAL HYMN: "Songs of praise the angels sang." Tune composed for this occasion by G. Darlington Richards

VERSICLES AND RESPONSES.....Ferial

PSALM 98

NUNC DIMITTIS IN G (for unison singing)
G. Darlington Richards

APOSTLES' CREED

VERSICLES AND RESPONSES.....Ferial

HYMN: "O Jesus, Thou art standing".....*St. Hilda*

PERIOD OF INTERCESSION, with choral responses to intercessions, arranged from familiar hymns

OFFERTORY: "Meditation on *Schönster Herr Jesus*"
Philip G. Kreckel

ANTHEM: "When the Lord turned again the captivity"
Eaton Faning

HYMN: "God of grace and God of glory" by Harry Emerson Fosdick.....*Regent Square*

SERMON by the Rev. Howard Chandler Robbins, D.D., President of the Hymn Society

RECESSIONAL HYMN: "Our day of praise is done"..*Garden City*

Organ Postlude: "Psalm Tune Postlude on *London New*"
Harvey Grace

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1930-1955

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Louis F. Benson, D.D.

II. The Religious Value of Hymns
William Pierson Merrill, D.D.

III. The Praise of the Virgin in Early Latin Hymns
Ruth Ellis Messenger, Ph.D.

IV. The Significance of the Old French Psalter
Professor Waldo Selden Pratt, L.H.D., Mus.D.

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XIX. Louis Fitzgerald Benson
Morgan Phelps Noyes, D.D.

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THE PAPERS OF THE HYMN SOCIETY

CARL F. PRICE *Editor*

VI

WHAT IS A HYMN?

by

CARL F. PRICE

THE HYMN SOCIETY OF AMERICA
NEW YORK CITY
1937

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XX. **The Olney Hymns**
John Henry Johansen, S.T.M.

XXI. **The Philosophy of the Hymn**
Nancy White Thomas

XXII. **Charles Wesley**
Alfred Burton Haas, M.A.

XXIII. **To Praise God: The Life and Work of Charles Winfred Douglas**

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Fourth Printing

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What is a Hymn?

The development through the ages of ideas on the nature of a hymn may be illustrated by the general shape of an hour glass, broad at its source in Greek literature, tapering down to the limited confines of Augustine's narrow definition, and then expanding through wider usage to our modern idea of a hymn.

The conception of a hymn developed by the Greek poets, such as Homer and Hesiod, was of a song addressed to some greatly admired personage or quality or object. This conception has its counterpart in English, and even in American, literature, in such poems as Spenser's "Hymne in Honour of Love," Shelley's "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," Swinburne's "Hymn to Proserpina" and Longfellow's "Hymn to the Night."

From the very beginning of the early Christian Church there is record that hymns were sung. To the Emperor Trajan, Pliny reported that the strange new sect "sang hymns to Christ as God." But if we accept—as most scholars do—the Pauline rhythmical lines, beginning, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead," as a part of one of the early Christian hymns, we must recognize that this hymn was not addressed to God, but to the sleeper who needed to be spiritually aroused.

In spite of Paul's epistolary reference to the use of hymns as distinct from psalms, in "teaching and admonishing one another," the idea of the hymn gradually became so restricted, as the Church developed, that eventually the words of Bishop Ambrose's devout convert, Saint Augustine (in his Commentary on Psalm 148), became accepted as the classical definition of a Christian hymn:

> Do you know what a hymn is? It is singing to the praise of God. If you praise God and do not sing, you utter no hymn. If you sing and praise not God, you utter no hymn. If you praise anything which does not pertain to the praise of God, though in singing you praise, you utter no hymn.

This was in essence adopted as the canonical definition of a hymn by the Council of Toledo, A. D. 633, in the following words:

> Whatever poems, then, are sung in the praise of God are called hymns. A hymn, moreover, is of those who sing and praise, which from the Greek into Latin is interpreted LAUS, because it is a song of joy and praise; but properly hymns are those containing the praise of God.

The three elements in this Augustinian definition are: a song, a song of praise, a song addressed to God. A small group of strict churchmen still insist upon this as the true definition; but the modern hymn has quite outgrown the cramped mold which Saint Augustine set for the ideal Christian hymn. There are in his three elements, however, ideas which are still recognized as profoundly valid and which must be retained in any definition of a genuine hymn.

1. A hymn is a song. A true hymn must be lyrical. This means more than that it *may* be set to music. It *must* be sung. There must be an interaction between the words and the music which is harmonious and reciprocal. Augustine is right when he says, If you do not sing, you utter no hymn.

2. There lies implicit, but not explicit, in Augustine's definition the idea that a hymn is addressed to God. This is in the main true, but not wholly so. In common usage, both ancient and modern, most hymns are thus addressed to Deity, but there are many and notable exceptions. Some of our noblest hymns do not fulfill this condition. The Bishop of Bristol not many years ago interdicted the use of *The English Hymnal* in his diocese because it contained some hymns addressed to the saints, and not to God. He would discard, however, much that is of rich spiritual value, if he enforced his interdiction upon all hymnal editors.[1] Take, for example, one of the finest hymns from the Greek, "The Day of Resurrection." It is addressed to the whole round world and all that is therein. Nobler words of challenge and inspiriting appeal are not often written than those of the second stanza in Neale's version,

> Our hearts be pure from evil,
> That we may see aright
> The Lord in rays eternal
> Of resurrection light;
> And, listening to His accents,
> May hear, so calm and plain,
> His own "All hail," and hearing,
> May raise the victor's strain.

"O day of rest and gladness," "Onward, Christian soldiers" and "Rejoice, ye pure in heart" may also be included among the many noble and worthy hymns, not directly addressed to God.

The *thought,* underlying Augustine's condition of an address to Deity, we regard as essential. The true hymn has a motion

[1] Pope Damasus (*b.* 306 A. D.) wrote a hymn addressed to the Martyr Agatha, which was the first known rhymed Latin Hymn—*Martyrus ecce die Agathae,* "Fair as the morn in the deep blushing East."

toward God. It brings God to mind. It seeks his glory in the lives of his children. All this is true, even if God is not directly addressed. The true hymn must be devotional in spirit, leading to God.

3. It is chiefly in Augustine's second condition, praise, that modern usage has expanded the hymn to a larger office. To praise God is only one of the purposes of singing hymns. The psalms, even in the paraphrases of the churches of the Reformation, contain other elements than praise. In our own day we have boldly come back to Saint Paul's idea that there is room for teaching and admonishing one another in the use of hymns. However secondary these purposes may be, it is legitimate to recognize all the possibilities in true hymns for mutual encouragement and for the exalting of Christian ideals.

Music is one of the most important helps toward worship. The chief purposes of worship are the voicing of the soul's relationship to God and the expression of our attitudes toward him. The attitude of praise is by no means the only attitude toward God which his children express in musical terms in the worship of God. The Christian life in its thought and feeling, its visioning and purposing, and its innermost reality, has ever found its truest expression in song. The attitudes of reverence, penitence, trust, loyalty, aspiration, good will toward our fellow men—all these and more make up the total of religious experience which we voice, and in voicing deepen, through the worship of God in song. Our hymn books were poor indeed, if they did not express the Christian consciousness of the rule of God in the social order and the sharing of the purposes of God for a free, a united and a righteous world. Praise alone can never express these fundamental ideas. The essential element in any definition of a hymn is that it is a prayer, a prayer whose thought is as broad as human needs, as deep as human love, as high as man's loftiest aspirings. So much may be said for the strict definition of a hymn.

4. New ideas regarding both content and form have further entered into the consciousness of the modern Church concerning the true hymn, and these have expanded our conception of what constitutes a *good* hymn.

a. A hymn must be reverent and devotional. It must be marked by a loftiness of tone and style, by liturgical propriety and the absence of triviality.

b. A hymn must be truly poetic in form and substance. A hymn is a lyric poem, not only in its relation to music, as has been noted. It must be lyrical rather than didactic. A rhymed argument is not a hymn. A true poem is usually marked by a touch

of mysticism and by spontaneity of feeling, according to Dr. Jeremiah B. Reeves. But let him speak for himself:

> The hymn is a quite definite and distinct type of poetry. Its boundaries as regards both form and content are plainly and narrowly laid down. . . . Merely as a lyric it would of course have narrow limitations; as a religious lyric its limitations are multiplied; but in that it must be the medium of concerted thought and feeling on the gravest matters, and yet simple enough to be sung chorally by an assemblage, . . . it is very much more limited. The hymn must be a lyrical poem, simple of form, easy and smooth of movement; its ideas must be direct, unified, immediately apparent; its manner must have the decorum and gravity befitting public worship.[2]

Before proposing a Hymn Society definition of the Christian hymn, it may prove profitable to consider other definitions constructed by a few of our best hymnologists.

Our own distinguished fellow-member, the late Dr. Louis F. Benson, America's foremost authority on the hymns, had this to say:

> Even modern Christian practice itself shows no agreement as to what makes a hymn. When we speak of the hymns of the Greek Church, most of us have in mind the metrical versions Neale and Brownlie have prepared for congregational use. But the originals are in prose, not verse. They are set into the texts of the various offices, often so interlaced with Psalm or gospel or homily that only an expert can unravel the tangle. And they are not sung by the congregation or put into their hands, but reserved for the officiants alone.
>
> In the Roman Catholic Church, "Hymns" are the versified devotions inserted in the prose Psalms of the Daily Office, as distinguished from the "Sequences" of the Mass. They are not vernacular, but Latin. They are not sung by the people, and outside of monasteries it is enough that the priests read them in silence. Nowadays that communion has also its own popular hymns for certain uses and occasions.
>
> In the Anglican Church the makers of the Prayer Book called the prose "Te Deum" and "Benedictus" hymns, but not so the L.M. and C.M. versions of "Veni Creator." The editors of successive editions seem on the whole to have thought of a hymn as a prose canticle taken from the New Testament in contrast with an Old Testament Psalm.
>
> In early American Presbyterianism "hymn" was a term of adventure or reproach. It covered verses of human manufacture offered to take the place of inspired Psalms. To our separated Presbyterian Brethren that meaning and that reproach still linger in the word.
>
> In fact all these varied applications still linger in the word. And if we are to discuss hymns rationally we must remember them all.

---

[2] *The Hymn in History and Literature,* by Jeremiah Bascom Reeves, Ph.D., p. 32. By permission of the D. Appleton-Century Company, Inc., owners of the copyright.

The only feature common throughout seems to be the intent of use in worship. A Christian hymn therefore is a form of words appropriate to be sung or chanted in public devotions. Almost every Protestant hymn book contains the prose "Te Deum," ill-adapted as it is to congregational singing, and some prose Psalms and canticles set to chants. At the same time an immense preponderance of metrical compositions, divided into stanzas that a congregation can sing by repeating the tune to each one, shows that such in the main is the present-day Protestant conception of the word "hymn."[3]

Frederick J. Gilman, in a chapter on "Music and Religion,"[4] makes this comment:

In these pages our studies will again and again be found to conduct us to the borderland dividing the hymn proper from devotional verse. No sharp line of demarcation can be drawn between the two. Schaff's definition of a hymn as "a spiritual meditation in rhythmical prose or verse" has one foot in both territories. But one thing is clear—a hymn must be suitable for congregational singing. Ideally, it must pass a double test—Does it read well, and, Does it sing well? If it does the one and not the other, it is not a good hymn. Yet if it does both and lacks *life,* it profits nothing.

Horder, with his keen sense of literary values, insists that the true hymn must be a poem:

It is not too much to say, therefore, that we have of late entered on a new era in relation to hymnody, and that the hymnals of the future will be more poetic than those of the past. A hymn should be a lyric poem. Rhymed prose dealing with theological doctrine is not a hymn. There must be that indescribable element we call poetic, proceeding from "the vision and the faculty divine," to render verses, though metrically faultless, a hymn. Wanting this, they want the very life blood of a true hymn. This is the great point of difference between earlier and modern hymns as a whole. There are exceptions. Hymns could be mentioned belonging to every age in which the true poetic note can be heard.[5]

In the chapter on "Carols" in Julian's *Dictionary of Hymnology,* the Rev. Thomas Helmore, musical editor of *The Hymnal Noted,* classifies many of our hymns as carols:

There is doubtless a wide border-land on which many a religious song may not inaccurately be classed under the head both of *hymn* and of *carol.* . . . Such songs do not come strictly within Saint Augustine's definition; and it may therefore be suggested that they partake more or less of the nature of religious *carols.* And this applies equally to many modern compositions called *hymns.* It

[3] *The Hymnody of the Christian Church,* by Louis F. Benson, D.D., pp. 24, 25. By permission of Harper and Brothers, publishers.

[4] *The Evolution of the English Hymn,* by Frederick J. Gilman, pp. 27, 28. By permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers.

[5] *The Hymn Lover,* by W. Garrett Horder, p. 493. J. Curwen and Sons.

seems, then, not too much to assert that from the very beginning, the Christian Church has been using sacred lyrics which, whether we range them under the head of *Psalms, Hymns, Spiritual Songs, Odes, Canticles* or simply *Songs,* had among them some at least, if not many, having the special characteristics of the carol.[6]

After a consideration of these and other definitions, and also of the modern usage of the hymn among Christian churches, the following is proposed as the Hymn Society definition: its first sentence treats only of the elements which *must* be found in every hymn, the *sine qua non;* its second sentence, of those which are to be desired in a *good* hymn, the *desiderata:*

A Christian hymn is a lyric poem, reverently and devotionally conceived, which is designed to be sung and which expresses the worshiper's attitude toward God, or God's purposes in human life. It should be simple and metrical in form, genuinely emotional, poetic and literary in style, spiritual in quality, and in its ideas so direct and so immediately apparent as to unify a congregation while singing it.

[6] *A Dictionary of Hymnology,* edited by John Julian, D.D. Revised edition with new supplement, p. 207 John Murray, 1908.

THE PAPERS OF THE
HYMN SOCIETY

CARL F. PRICE *Editor*

VII

AN ACCOUNT OF THE BAY PSALM BOOK

by

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*The Bay Psalm Book**

The publication of *The Bay Psalm Book* at Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1640, was an event which well deserves to be commemorated. Rev. Thomas Prince, one of the earliest Massachusetts historians, says, in the preface to his revision of the book which he prepared for The Old South Church in Boston and published in 1758, that it had "the Honour of being the *First Book* printed in *North America,*" but Prince did not know that a printing press had been set up in Mexico City a full century earlier than that in Cambridge. *The Bay Psalm Book* was, however, the first book printed in the English-speaking colonies on this continent, and copies of early editions are for book collectors today among the rarest and most highly valued items of Americana. It is also our earliest literary monument, for it was no reprint of a European book, but was the first to be wholly composed on this soil. For more than a century it was the treasury of worship-song not only for New England but also for many churches in other colonies as far south as Philadelphia. It is an important key to our understanding of the religious life of its day and it marks the first stage in the slow development of American hymnody which flowered in the great outburst of song in the nineteenth century. For all these reasons it commands attention and respect.

It may seem strange that the Puritans of the Massachusetts Bay Colony should have set about the preparation of their own book of metrical psalms so soon after their arrival here. The Pilgrims at Plymouth were well served with the psalm-book which Henry Ainsworth had published in 1612 for the English exiles in Holland. Longfellow was quite correct in his picture of Priscilla:

> Open wide on her lap lay the well-worn psalm-book of Ainsworth,
> Printed in Amsterdam, the words and the music together,
> Rough-hewn, angular notes, like stones in the walls of a churchyard,
> Darkened and overhung by the running vine of the verses.

Ainsworth's *Book of Psalmes* contained thirty-nine tunes, about

* NOTE: This account of *The Bay Psalm Book* has been prepared for the Hymn Society of America by Dr. Henry Wilder Foote, Chairman of the Boston Chapter of the Society, and is based on a chapter in Dr. Foote's *Three Centuries of American Hymnody,* recently published by the Harvard University Press.

half of them from French and Dutch sources, and the Pilgrims continued to use it until 1692.

The Puritans of the Bay Colony brought with them copies of *The whole Booke of Psalms* of which John Day of London had printed the first complete edition in 1562. It was commonly called "Sternhold and Hopkins," from the two principal authors whose names appeared on the title-page, until the publication in 1696 of Tate and Brady's *New Version of the Psalms* gave rise to the nickname of "The Old Version" for the earlier book. "Sternhold and Hopkins" had already been in use in England for two generations when the first Puritans emigrated to this country and was to be cherished there for several generations to come.

In spite of the associations which all of the Puritans who came hither must have had with "Sternhold and Hopkins" they were dissatisfied with it because of their unquestioning acceptance of Calvin's doctrine of worship song. Calvin held that hymns of "humane composure" were not admissible for use in public worship, and at Geneva would allow only the use of metrical versions of inspired Scripture, sung to grave and noble melodies. Inasmuch as the original Hebrew text was viewed as the literal Word of God it was obviously important that the metrical translations should be as "close-fitting" as possible, that every shade of meaning should be carried over without alteration into the English verse. Fallible human notions must not distort or corrupt the authentic meaning. Therefore accuracy in translating the inspired text was the primary aim; the literary quality of the verse was a quite secondary consideration. Ainsworth had been a good Hebrew scholar, though a poor poet, but Sternhold and Hopkins, though slightly better poets, had known no Hebrew and had simply turned into the popular ballad metres the available prose translations of the psalms. It is difficult enough to translate any poetry into the verse forms of another language and yet preserve its exact shades of meaning; and to translate Hebrew poetry, with its rhythmical parallelism and wholly alien structure, into the English ballad metres without either omitting some of the ideas contained in the Hebrew text or putting in others not to be found there, is a task of well-nigh insuperable difficulty, as many better poets than Sternhold and Hopkins have discovered.

The Puritan divines, well versed in Hebrew, were dis-

turbed by the inaccuracies of translation which they found in the current English metrical psalms. Cotton Mather, writing in his *Magnalia Christi Americana,* 1702, about the origins of *The Bay Psalm Book,* states the situation clearly:

> Tho' they blessed God for the Religious Endeavours of them who translated the Psalms into the Meetre usually Annex'd at the End of the Bible, yet they beheld in the Translation so many Detractions from, Additions to, and Variations of, not only the Text, but the very Sense of the Psalmist, that it was an Offense to them.

Therefore, in 1636, the year in which Harvard College was founded, the work of producing a fresh metrical translation which should faithfully adhere to the Hebrew text was parcelled out among "thirty pious and learned Ministers . . . the chief Divines in the Country [who] took each of them a Portion to be translated." We have no information as to how many of the thirty fulfilled their assignments. Probably most of them either quickly discovered their limitations when it came to writing verse, or found that their parishes demanded so much of their attention that they could do no more than offer suggestions as to disputed readings of the Hebrew text. At any rate it seems clear that the bulk of the work was done by Rev. Richard Mather of Dorchester and Rev. Thomas Welde and Rev. John Eliot of Roxbury. This is indicated by Cotton Mather, who says that they

> were of so different a Genius for their poetry that Mr. Shepard of Cambridge, on the Occasion addressed them to this Purpose,
>
> You Roxbury Poets, keep clear of the Crime
> Of missing to give us a very good Rhime;
> And you of Dorchester, your verses lengthen,
> But with the Text's own words, you will them strengthen.

The book was printed on the little hand press which had been acquired by Rev. Jose Glover, a man of considerable property who had sailed from England in 1638 with his wife and children, accompanied by a printer named Stephen Day and three assistants, who were obligated to work out the passage money which Glover had advanced. Glover "fell sick of a feaver and dyed" on the voyage, but his widow established herself in Cambridge and there set up the press, with Stephen Day in charge. In 1641 she married Henry Dunster, the first president of Harvard College, and two years later she died.

The preparation of *The Bay Psalm Book* must have been a slow job. Consultations between the ministers, or with the printers, involved trips on horseback. The press could print only a few pages at a time and each batch of sheets had to be sent to Roxbury and Dorchester for correction. The printers were not skilled in their craft; the spelling is late Elizabethan and the punctuation defies all rules. The book contained 296 pages and it was not until midsummer, 1640, that the task was done and the books were bound, presumably by John Sanders of Boston, the only bookbinder known to have been in the colony. In the course of a lawsuit over the Cambridge press, sixteen years later, Stephen Day testified that 1,700 copies of the first edition were printed, at a cost of £33 for printing and £29 for paper; that copies were sold for twenty pence apiece; and that the net receipts were £141, s. 13, d. 6, leaving a profit of £79, s. 13, d. 4.[1]

Only ten copies of the first edition[2] survive, five of which, including Richard Mather's own copy, were, in the middle of the eighteenth century, in the possession of Thomas Prince, three of them in perfect condition. They formed part of Prince's "New England Library" which he bequeathed to The Old South Church, "to be kept and remain in their Public Library for ever." They remained in the steeple of the church for a century. Then three of them, including Mather's copy, passed into private hands, a blundering church officer who took no interest in the old volumes, giving them in exchange for some modern books which were wanted for the library. A second edition, with a few corrections, was printed in 1647, of which only two copies survive.

The book appeared under the title *The Whole Booke of Psalmes Faithfully Translated into English Metre. Whereunto is prefixed a discourse declaring not only the lawfullnes, but also the necessity of the heavenly Ordinance of singing Scripture Psalmes in the Churches of God - - - - - Imprinted 1640.*

A rough draft of the "discourse," or preface, in Richard Mather's hand is preserved in the Boston Public Library, and he may therefore have been the primary author whose draft

[1] The accuracy of these figures has been questioned, but presumably they are approximately correct.

[2] In 1903 a facsimile reprint of the first edition was published with an historical introduction by Wilberforce Eames.

THE PSALMES

In Metre

PSALME I

O Bleſſed man, that in th'advice
of wicked doeth not walk:
nor ſtand in ſinners way, nor ſit
in chayre of ſcornfull folk.
2 But in the law of Iehovah,
is his longing delight:
and in his law doth meditate,
by day and eke by night.
3 And he ſhall be like to a tree
planted by water-rivers:
that in his ſeaſon yeilds his fruit,
and his leafe never withers.
4 And all he doth, ſhall proſper well,
the wicked are not ſo:
but they are like vnto the chaffe,
which winde drives to and fro.
5 Therefore ſhall not ungodly men,
riſe to ſtand in the doome,
nor ſhall the ſinners with the juſt,
in their aſſemblie *come*.
6 For of the righteous men, the Lord
acknowledgeth the way:
but the way of vngodly men,
ſhall vtterly decay.

A PSALM

A page from *The Bay Psalm Book*, 1640

THE

VVHOLE

BOOKE OF PSALMES

Faithfully

TRANSLATED *into* ENGLISH

Metre.

Whereunto is prefixed a discourse declaring not only the lawfullnes, but also the necessity of the heavenly Ordinance of singing Scripture Psalmes in the Churches of God.

Coll. III.

Let the word of God dwell plenteously in you, in all wisdome, teaching and exhorting one another in Psalmes, Himnes, and spirituall Songs, singing to the Lord with grace in your hearts.

Iames V.

If any be afflicted, let him pray, and if any be merry let him sing psalmes.

Imprinted

1640

Title page of the first edition of *The Bay Psalm Book*, from a copy in the New York Public Library

was worked over by his colleagues. As printed it is an illuminating document. It begins on a note of conciliation.

> The singing of Psalmes, though it breath forth nothing but holy harmony, and melody: yet such is the subtilty of the enemie, and the enmity of our nature against the Lord, & his wayes, that our hearts can finde matter of discord in this harmony, and crochets of division in this holy melody.

It then asks,

> First. what psalmes are to be sung in churches? whether Davids and other scripture psalmes, or the psalmes invented by the gifts of godly men in every age of the church. Secondly, if scripture psalmes, whether in their owne words, or in such meter as english poetry is wont to run in? Thirdly. by whom are they to be sung? whether by the whole churches together with their voices? or by one man singing alone and the rest joyning in silence & in the close saying amen.

As we should expect, the editors advocate the congregational use of the psalms in English verse. But the version should follow as closely as possible the Hebrew original, so they go on,

> If therefore the verses are not alwayes so smooth and elegant as some may desire or expect; let them consider that Gods Altar needs not our pollishings: Ex. 20. for we have respected rather a plaine translation, than to smooth our verses with the sweetnes of any paraphrase, and soe have attended Conscience rather than Elegance, fidelity rather than poetry, in translating the hebrew words into english language, and Davids poetry into english meetre; that soe wee may sing in Sion the Lords songs of prayse according to his owne will; untill hee take us from hence, and wipe away all our teares, & bid us enter into our masters joye to sing eternall Halleluiahs.

The Bay Psalm Book was greeted with enthusiasm by the churches for which it had been prepared. The church at Ipswich clung to "Sternhold and Hopkins" until about 1667, and the church at Salem, which had adopted Ainsworth's *Book of Psalmes* at a very early date, continued to use it until the same year, but outside of the Plymouth Colony it is probable that every other church in New England soon accepted the new book, of which they had good reason to be proud.

When the book came into use, however, its literary deficiencies became apparent. The "poets" of Roxbury and Dorchester were, in truth, not poets at all, though godly and

learned men. They had undoubtedly produced a very "close-fitting" translation of the Hebrew text, which after all was their primary purpose, but the verse had many awkward turns and inversions, and often limped painfully. Perhaps the 23rd Psalm is as favorable an example of their work as any:

The Lord to mee a shepheard is,
  want therefore shall not I.
Hee in the folds of tender-grasse,
  doth cause me down to lie:

To waters calme me gently leads
  Restore my soule doth hee:
he doth in paths of righteousnes:
  for his names sake leade mee.

Yea though in valley of deaths shade
  I walk, none ill I'le feare:
because thou art with mee, thy rod,
  and staffe my comfòrt are.

For mee a table thou hast spread,
  in presence of my foes:
thou dost annoynt my head with oyle,
  my cup it over-flowes.

Goodnes & mercy surely shall
  all my dayes follow mee:
and in the Lords house I shall dwell
  so long as dayes shall bee.

But there are occasional lines of rugged beauty, such as these from the 139th Psalm:

vss. 9 and 10

If I take mornings wings; & dwell
  where utmost sea-coasts bee.
E'vn there thy hand shall mee conduct:
  & thy right hand hold mee.

. . . . . .

11

then shall the night about mee be
  like to the lightsome day.

. . . . . .

14

Because that I am fashionèd
  in fearfull wondrous wise;
& that thy works are merveilous,
  my soule right well descries.

or these from Psalm 30:

vs. 5

For but a moment is his wrath,
  life in his love doth stay:
weeping may lodge with us a night
  but joye at break of day.

vs. 11

Thou into dancing for my sake
  converted hast my sadnes:
my sackcloth thou unloosed hast,
  and girded me with gladnes.

or from Psalm 35:

vss. 1-3

Plead, Lord, with them that with me plead:
  fight against them that fight with mee.
Of shield & buckler take thou hold,
  stand up my helper for to bee.
Draw out the speare & stop the way
  'gainst them that my pursuers bee:
And doe thou say unto my soule
  I am salvation unto thee.

All these lines are but slight re-arrangements of the text in the Authorized Version of the Bible, but in these instances the turns are skilfully made and happily phrased. While there is no single psalm maintaining throughout a level of poetic excellence which would make it acceptable for use today, there are a good many containing a few verses of similar quality. And there are two versions of the 100th Psalm, one in long metre (to fit the familiar Old Hundredth tune) and the other in common metre. The first of these two versions is decidedly superior to the second. These indications seem to show that several hands took part in the versification, and that one of the writers had more facility for good phrase-making than did the others. Who he was we do not know.[3] Possibly he was John Eliot, the "Apostle to the Indians" who in 1661 produced his metrical psalms in the Indian language.

[3] John Josselyn, in his *Account of Two Voyages to New England*, London, 1674, pp. 19-20, states that when he reached Boston in July, 1638, he delivered to Rev. John Cotton "from Mr. Francis Quarles the poet, the translation of the 16, 25, 51, 88, 113 and 137 Psalms into English meeter, for his approbation." It does not appear that any of Quarles's work was incorporated in the new book. Certainly the versions of those particular psalms are not noticeably superior to the rest of the translations.

The uncouth quality of much of the verse in *The Bay Psalm Book* has aroused the derision or the sarcasm of a host of unsympathetic critics, especially in the nineteenth century. Most of these critics have not taken the trouble to do more than glance at the book, and few, if any, understood either the intellectual outlook which it reflects or the extreme difficulty of the task imposed upon the authors. One such critic amused himself with this satirical and highly inaccurate description of the book:

> Welde, Eliot and Mather mounted the restive steed Pegasus, Hebrew Psalter in hand, and trotted in hot haste on the rough road of Shemitic roots and metrical psalmody. Other divines rode behind, and after cutting and slashing, mending and patching, twisting and turning, finally produced what must ever remain the most unique specimen of poetical tinkering in our literature.

This heavy-handed attempt at humor completely misconceives the real facts of the case. It is quite true that when we look at the printed page we wonder how the crude verses could possibly have been sung at all, much more how they could have endeared themselves to our ancestors. Our difficulty arises in part from the archaic spelling and the bad printing; in part from our complete unfamiliarity with the text. The fact is that these metrical psalms were sung, and with deep emotion, by several generations of Americans no less intelligent than their descendants, though living in a different world of thought. Several of these psalms, sung to the original tunes, have been used this year (1940) at commemorative services, and the congregations quickly discovered that both words and tunes were quite singable, and had an austere beauty and moving quality of their own.

Although *The Bay Psalm Book* met with immediate and general approval it was soon recognized that there was room for improvement in the verse. As Cotton Mather puts it,

> It was thought that a little more of Art was to be employed upon them: And for that Cause, they were committed unto Mr. Dunster, who Revised and Refined this Translation; and (with some Assistance from Mr. Richard Lyon. . . .) he brought it into the Condition wherein our Churches ever since have used it.

The revision prepared by President Dunster, with the assistance of young Mr. Richard Lyon, who was supposed to have a gift for poetry, appeared with a new title page reading,

The Psalms Hymns and Spiritual Songs of the Old and New Testaments, faithfully translated into English Meeter for the use, edification and comfort of the Saints, in public and private, especially in New England. It was printed "by Samuel Green at Cambridge in New England" in 1651. A single copy of the 2,000 printed survives in the New York Public Library. It will be noted that the phrase "The Bay Psalm Book" does not appear on the title page of either the edition of 1640 or that of 1651. It is, in fact, only the nickname by which both forms of the book have been commonly known, as "Sternhold and Hopkins" was the popular nickname for John Day's Psalter of 1562.

Julian, in his *Dictionary of Hymnology,* and Glass in *The Story of the Psalters,* both list what they call *The Bay Psalter* (1640) and *The New England Psalter* of "1650" (*sic*) as two separate and distinct books, and Julian says of the latter,

> This was mainly a revised version of Rous's *Psalter* made by President Dunster of Harvard College, Richard Lyon and thirty others.

Glass says the same thing in substantially the same words. Both are wrong in several respects. Whether *The Bay Psalter* and *The New England Psalter* should be regarded as two books or as successive editions of the same book is, perhaps, a technical question for bibliographers, but the latter view is the one commonly held. Julian and Glass both give an incorrect date—1650 instead of 1651—for the publication of Dunster's revision. The "thirty others" who are said to have taken part in the revision with Dunster obviously refers to the thirty learned divines to whom the work was originally committed in 1636. The statement that Dunster's revision was based upon Rous's *Psalter* is apparently without foundation. Rous's *Psalter* was published in 1643 (revised in 1647) and it is wholly probable that copies had reached New England before Dunster started to work, but Cotton Mather gives no indication that Dunster was influenced by it, saying only that Dunster

> was a very good Hebrician, and for that cause, he bore a great Part in the Metrical Version of the Psalms now used in our Churches.

Furthermore a word for word comparison of the text of a number of psalms, chosen at random, as printed in *The Bay Psalm Book* of 1640, in Rous's *Psalter* and in *The New England Psalter* of 1651, does not reveal a single instance in which

Dunster borrowed a line or phrase from Rous. On the contrary, it does disclose cases where Rous seems to have taken a line or phrase, sometimes with slight variations, from *The Bay Psalm Book* of 1640. Inasmuch as Rous's *Psalter* was the basis for the *Scottish Psalter* of 1650 *The Bay Psalm Book* may have had a slight and indirect influence upon that famous volume.

Dunster, with such aid as Richard Lyon may have been able to give, did produce a much improved version of the work of the "Roxbury poets." While he left some stanzas untouched he rewrote many others. The following verses from Psalm 1 may serve as examples. In the 1640 edition they read,

vss. 2 But in the law of Iehovah[4]
is his longing delight:
and in his law doth meditate,
by day and eke by night.

3 And he shall be like to a tree
planted by water-rivers:
that in his season yeilds his fruit,
and his leafe never withers.

5 Therefore shall not ungodly men,
rise to stand in the doome,
nor shall the sinners with the just,
in their assemblie *come*.

6 For of the righteous men, the Lord
acknowledgeth the way:
but the way of ungodly men,
shall utterly decay.

In the 1651 edition both the spelling and the verse are improved:

vss. 2 But he upon Jehovah's law
doth set his whole delight,
And in his law doth meditate
both in the day and night.

3 He shall be like a planted tree
by water-brooks which shall
In his due season yield his fruit,
whose leaf shall never fall.

5 Therefore shall not ungodly men
in judgment stand upright,
Nor in the assembly of the just
shall stand the sinful wight.

[4] Perhaps pronounced "Jee--ho--vay" here as apparently in some other places.

6 For of the righteous men, the Lord
acknowledgeth the way;
Where as the way of wicked men
shall utterly decay.

As the title page of the 1651 edition indicates, Dunster added to the psalms metrical versions of a number of "hymns and spiritual songs" which are to be found in various books of the Bible. Before the psalms he inserted versions of the Songs of Moses, of Deborah and Barak, and of Hannah, and David's Elegy. After the Book of Psalms were the Song of Solomon; Songs in the Prophet Isaiah (chaps. V, XII, XXV, XXVI and XXXVIII); the Lamentations of Jeremiah (chaps. III and V); the Prayers of Jonah and Habakkuk; the Songs of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of Zacharias, of Simeon, of the Four Beasts (Rev. 4: 8), of the Elders (Rev. 4: 11), of the Church (Rev. 5: 9), of the Angels (Rev. 5: 12), of All the Creatures (Rev. 5: 13), of the Innumerable Multitude of Saints (Rev. 7: 10), and of Moses and of the Lamb (Rev. 15: 3). Of course the traditional interpretation of the frankly amorous passages in the Song of Solomon was that they portrayed the love of Christ and his church, but nevertheless the inclusion of a metrical version beginning,

Let him with kisses of his mouth
be pleased me to kiss;
Because much better than the wine
thy loving kindness is,

provided the Puritan youths and maidens with pleasing and quotable love songs right in their own psalm-books. It is perhaps safe to guess that they were used more frequently on private occasions than in public worship.

The Bay Psalm Book in this revised form remained in general use in New England for more than a century. Cotton Mather, writing about 1700, says in his *Magnalia Christi,*

> tho' I heartily join with those Gentlemen, who wish that the *Poetry* hereof were mended; yet I must confess, That the Psalms have never yet seen a Translation that I know of, nearer to the *Hebrew Original.*

That, after all, was the aim of the authors, and they succeeded very well, from the point of view of their time and place. Twenty-seven editions were printed in New England, the latest in 1762. It was reprinted in England as early as 1647, and,

in the revised form, in 1652, and ran through at least twenty editions there, the latest being that of 1754. Thomas Prince says that "in that country" it was "by some eminent Congregations prefer'd to all others in their Public Worship." It was also reprinted in Scotland half a dozen times between 1732 and 1759. Altogether well over fifty editions were printed before it gave way either to the *New Version* by Tate and Brady or to Watts. Of the scores of English metrical versions of the psalms, only those by Sternhold and Hopkins, by Tate and Brady, by Watts, and the Scottish *Psalter,* exceeded it in the number of editions printed or in widespread and long-continued use.

As Mather indicates, however, in the quotation just cited, by 1700 *The Bay Psalm Book* had begun to seem old-fashioned, if not archaic, as "Sternhold and Hopkins" had in England, due to the great changes in language and in literary taste which had taken place between the days of Spenser and those of Addison. In England the demand for a more modern psalmody was met by Tate and Brady's *New Version* (1696), which slowly superseded the Old Version. In the colonies the change was made more slowly still. In 1757 twenty-four laymen of the First Church in Roxbury addressed a letter to their pastor, the Rev. Amos Adams, who then held the pulpit which Thomas Welde and John Eliot had occupied more than a century earlier, requesting the replacement of *The Bay Psalm Book* by "Tate and Brady." They wrote,

> The New England Version of the Psalms, however useful it may formerly have been, is now become through the natural variableness of Language, not only very uncouth but in many Places unintelligible; whereby the mind instead of being Raised and spirited in singing The Praises of Almighty God, and thereby better prepared to attend the other Parts of Divine Service, is Damped and made spiritless in the Performance of the Duty.

They go on to recommend as

> much preferable - - - The Version Made by Tate and Brady, which has lately been Rec'd by Divers of the Neighboring Churches in the Room of the New England version.

The Roxbury church voted in July, 1758, to make the change, thus discarding the book which its own earliest ministers had helped to produce.

In the fall of the same year Thomas Prince brought out

his revision of *The Bay Psalm Book.* He had long wanted to introduce a more modern version into use at the Old South Meeting-house, but his people, unlike those in Roxbury, had clung to the old book, although they had finally agreed to let him revise it. He did so to the extent of making what was practically a new book, improving and modernizing the verse, and printing after the psalms "an addition of Fifty other Hymns on the most important subjects of Christianity." His book was used in the Old South Meeting-house for the first time on the Sunday following Prince's death, and for thirty years thereafter. But, with all its excellencies, it was not adopted elsewhere, as might have been the case had it appeared a decade or two earlier. As it was, it came too late. The reign of *The Bay Psalm Book,* which had meant so much to the colonists in the seventeenth century, was coming to an end, and by the time the Revolution was over it had been almost everywhere replaced, generally by Watts's *Psalms and Hymns.*

The early editions of *The Bay Psalm Book* contained no music. Probably there was no one in the colony capable of engraving it. But the first edition did include at the end of the book, as did the later editions, an "Admonition" about the tunes to be used. It reads, in part, as follows:

> The verses of these psalmes may be reduced to six kindes, the first whereof may be sung in very neere fourty common tunes; as they are collected, out of our chief musicians, by *Tho. Ravenscroft.* The second kinde may be sung in three tunes, as Ps. 25, 50 and 67 in our english psalm books. The third. may be sung indifferently, as ps. the 51, 100, & ten comandements, in our english psalme books. which three tunes aforesaid, comprehend almost all this whole book of psalmes, as being tunes most familiar to us.

Altogether some fifty tunes are referred to in this "Admonition" as being either in Ravenscroft's *Psalter* or in "our English psalme-books," meaning, presumably, editions of "Sternhold and Hopkins" which included music. An edition of "Sternhold and Hopkins," with 65 tunes, had appeared as early as 1564, and several more elaborate arrangements of psalm-tunes had been published in England before 1600, the best being Damon's *Psalms of David* in 1579; Este's *Psalter* in 1592; and Allison's in 1599. Este (East) printed his tunes in four-part settings arranged by distinguished musicians, and Allison, who set his tunes in pure Elizabethan counterpoint, was also a musician of high standing. The settings in these

books were of the madrigal rather than the ecclesiastical type, too elaborate for congregational singing, and intended for social use. Ravenscroft's *Psalter,* however, to which the "Admonition" refers, had been published in 1621 and was intended for use in worship. It contained 105 settings and was by far the best available collection until superseded by Playford's after 1677. Ravenscroft was himself a musician of the first rank in England, and had drawn upon the work of twenty others of his own or the immediately preceding generation, including John Milton, father of the poet, Dowland, Farnaby, Morley, Tallis and Tomkins. We have not only the evidence of the "Admonition" that his *Psalter* was known in the Bay Colony. The copy which belonged to John Endecott is now owned by the Massachusetts Historical Society. The point to be observed is that, although the authors of *The Bay Psalm Book* were unable to print the tunes with their psalms, they were acquainted with and recommended to users of the book the best English sources for psalm-tunes which then existed.

An edition of *The Bay Psalm Book* with tunes is said to have appeared in 1690. If so, no copy survives. But the ninth edition, 1698, contains thirteen tunes at the back of the book, the earliest music printed in the English-speaking colonies of North America. It also contains "some few directions for ordering the Voice - - - without Squeaking above, or Grumbling below." The tunes are Oxford, Litchfield, Low-Dutch, York, Windsor, Cambridge, St. David's, Martyrs, Hackney, 119th Psalm Tune, 100th Psalm Tune, 115th Psalm Tune, and 148th Psalm Tune, these being, no doubt, best remembered and easiest to sing. In later editions the number of tunes varies from twelve to fourteen, occasioned by the addition of the Ten Commandments Tune or the dropping out of Hackney and the 115th Psalm Tune. The tunes were first printed from woodcuts, crudely engraved, and copied, not without mistakes, from an undetermined English source. They are in the old diamond-shaped notes, in two-part harmony, bass and treble, without bars except at the end of the line. In later editions well-executed copper plates were used, and it is strange that this was not done in 1698, as there were a number of silversmiths in Boston quite competent to do the work.

There is no reason to believe that the Puritans of the first migration did not sing as well as their English contemporaries whom they left behind them. We have adequate evidence that

the Pilgrims sang skilfully the longer and more difficult French and Dutch tunes in Ainsworth's *Psalter*. Psalm-singing in church was of course gravely handicapped by the absence of any instrumental support and by the practice of "lining-out" the psalm. At that period in England only cathedrals, college chapels and the larger parish churches had organs. The Puritans in New England, like many other bodies of Christians before and since, opposed any instrumental music in the meeting-house, and the use of bass-viols came in but slowly in the middle of the eighteenth century, to be followed by organs about the end of that century. "Lining-out" the psalms had begun in England with the use of the metrical psalms in worship. Since in many, if not most, congregations there was either an insufficient supply of psalm-books or a large proportion of persons who could not read, the practice arose of having the clerk, or in New England a deacon, read a line or two of the psalm, and then lead the singing of what had been read, alternately reading and singing through the whole psalm. Originally this was regarded as a temporary device to meet a special situation, but in both countries it persisted long after the occasion for it had ceased, in spite of bitter complaints that it made impossible any good congregational singing.

Furthermore, the ability to sing rapidly declined in New England with the disappearance of the first generation of settlers who had the cultural background of middle-class life in England. Their children and grandchildren lacked this background and social stimulus and were brought up in the life of the pioneer, in small communities, and with few contacts with the outside world. By the time the 1698 edition of *The Bay Psalm Book* appeared with its thirteen printed tunes probably not many people could read music, and most of the tunes in Ravenscroft's *Psalter* had fallen into disuse. The situation in Plymouth clearly illustrates the process. By 1692 the descendants of the Pilgrims who had so well sung the long French and Dutch tunes printed in Ainsworth's *Psalter* found that music too difficult for them, and after long discussion abandoned Ainsworth for *The Bay Psalm Book* and the few and simple tunes which still survived in use in the Bay Colony. It was not until early in the eighteenth century, between 1715 and 1730, that there was a determined and successful effort, led by the ministers, to revive singing.

The decline in singing, serious as it was, has been exagger-

ated by many writers who have twisted a casual footnote in Palfrey's *History of New England* into the statement that the first Puritans were limited to only five psalm-tunes. The "Admonition" in *The Bay Psalm Book* and the thirteen tunes in the 1698 edition are a sufficient answer to such misstatements. In the earlier days, at least, a considerable number of tunes were known and used. Some of these tunes were of Genevan origin, like Old Hundredth. Our forefathers called that a "jocund and lively air," because they sang it in its original, quick form. Indeed, some of the French tunes were so lively that critics dubbed them "Genevan jigs." Most of the English psalm-tunes, however, were grave and beautiful airs, commonly sung in unison. They are often cast in a mode unfamiliar to us, but reminiscent of the older church music of Europe. Thus the London Tune suggests the plainsong of the medieval church. Like so many psalm-tunes and folk-songs of the period it is in the minor key, which does not seem to have had for our forefathers the suggestion of plaintiveness or sorrow it has for many people today.

A few of the psalm-tunes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, besides Old Hundredth, have survived in use. Windsor, Winchester Old, St. Flavian, Martyrs and York—known in Scotland as "The Stilt"—are to be found in some modern hymn-books, and others, whether of Genevan or English origin, are being restored to use. Many of them are easily sung and are beautiful melodies, vigorous, virile, and free from the sentimentality and secular quality of many of the popular hymn-tunes of the nineteenth century.

There is no reason to doubt that the Puritans, and others who used *The Bay Psalm Book,* found in its verses and in the tunes to which they sang them an emotional satisfaction as deep and genuine as we find in singing our best-loved hymns today. They had good reason to "bless God for the Religious Endeavours" of the authors of *The Bay Psalm Book,* and we today should look back upon their work with pride, as the earliest piece of American literature, and as a moving expression of the religious thought and feeling of our ancestors.

THE PAPERS OF THE
HYMN SOCIETY

CARL F. PRICE *Editor*

VIII

LOWELL MASON

An Appreciation
of His
Life and Work

by

HENRY LOWELL MASON

THE HYMN SOCIETY OF AMERICA
NEW YORK CITY
1941

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Lowell Mason

Lowell Mason, the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of whose birth is to be observed on January 8, 1942, was born in Medfield, Massachusetts, in 1792, and there the first twenty years of his life were passed. Of this period he himself has written that he gave little promise, save in music, for which he early manifested a strong inclination. These years, he goes on to say, were spent in doing nothing but playing upon all manner of musical instruments that came within his reach. Despite this somewhat disparaging account, however, another has written—the late Theodore F. Seward, one time Mason's pupil, and his long-time friend—that Lowell Mason was a born educator, and that he demonstrated to the American people the two great correlated truths that music is a universal gift and that childhood is the proper time for cultivating it. He was destined as a matter of fact to become the outstanding leader among musical educators of the nineteenth century—and not only a musical educator, but one in a broad pedagogical sense as well.

Although the period of Lowell Mason's active work came to a close seventy years ago, its beneficial influences live today, as in truth they bid fair to live through years to come; for with characteristic foresight and practical application, he utilized in his work sound basic principles, raising his structures, so to speak, like a master architect, upon foundations firm and enduring. Of all his innumerable pupils the most indefatigable was, we believe, himself! Largely self-taught, he realized as a youth that time was fleeting, that the night cometh when no man can work, and he persistently sought to educate not only others but also himself.

There is an amusing story told of him illustrative of his teaching aptitude and of his perseverance. Invited to train a band at a neighboring village, when he met them he found a number of instruments new to him. He suggested that it might be well to leave them with him to be tuned and properly adjusted before the following lesson: these things he did, but he also practiced upon them until he felt prepared to meet such demands as might be made upon him as instructor.

Music, one hundred and fifty years ago in this country, was neither well understood nor, generally speaking, held in high esteem. True, efforts had been made in New England prior to Lowell Mason's time, at various periods and by various

men, to redeem the music of the Church from the lamentable condition to which by the close of the 17th century it had declined. To trace the tortuous course of psalmody from the days of its comparative excellence as practiced by the earliest settlers would carry us far afield from our present purpose; still, reference, however brief, may here be made to the earnest endeavors of a group of divines—Thomas Symmes, John Tufts, Thomas Walter, James Lyon—who instituted early in the 18th century the so-called Reform of 1720. Speaking from their pulpits in no uncertain terms, publishing enlightening books and essays, these champions of progress by degrees aroused the people from their state of apathy, despite sharp and long drawn out controversy, and a new, disturbing element soon to be encountered—the importation of inferior tunes of the imitative or fugal style. The days of the drawling psalm singing, however, were gradually drawing to a close, to be followed by an era of welcome change. To one born in Boston credit is largely due for having displaced the distorted tunes of psalmody by catchy, lively airs—William Billings, an energetic, though untutored, composer, who helped pave the way to a sound, legitimate music worthy of the Church.

Although Mason evinced a fervent love of music as a boy, as stated above, and an unusual ability in mastering musical instruments, public opinion at the time viewed such gifts as of little use and hopelessly unpromising. Could anything worth while be expected of a youth who failed to interest himself in a practical occupation? A farmer, a blacksmith, a merchant—well and good! But what could anyone amount to who chose to pass his time in blowing a flute and singing? Lowell's father, a manufacturing merchant, was indeed perplexed—and this despite the fact that he himself played the bass viol in the church choir for many years. If he left his country store in charge of the misguided son, he was likely to find, on returning, that his "managing clerk" had locked the door and departed with some alluring companion with the key in his pocket!

At the age of sixteen, nevertheless, Lowell Mason took charge of the village church singers, and for the following four years while living at Medfield he conducted various singing classes in neighboring towns and villages.

In 1812 an opportunity arose which seemed to the practical merchant, Lowell's father, most opportune; namely, that the son should go to Savannah, Georgia, and devote himself to business. There he remained until called to Boston in 1827. Though he served as a teller in a bank in the southern city,

he devoted his evenings and spare hours to the study and teaching of music. He early joined a leading Savannah church, of which he was soon appointed musical director; he helped organize and became superintendent of the city's only Sunday school at the time, with a membership representing several denominations. Of a deeply religious nature, he *lived* his religion in his everyday life. Of magnetic personality, strong mind and dignified manner, he was the embodiment of poise, yet kindliness as well, for the basic qualities of his character were bodied forth in his bearing and outward appearance. He possessed a natural simplicity and straightforwardness, together with a winning sense of humor. Endowed with a rugged constitution, his capacity for work was unlimited.

While in Savannah, being dissatisfied with the current tunes of the Church, the young man sought music for his choir from the works of the masters. He delighted in taking themes from various outstanding compositions and harmonizing them as hymn-tunes for his church services. This led to the publication of his first book, known as *The Boston Handel and Haydn Society Collection of Church Music*, which appeared in the latter part of 1821, though bearing the date 1822. The book was an immediate success, bringing to the organization, whose name it bore, a helpful, opportune income. But this result was small in comparison with the beneficial influence the book exerted on the musical taste of the country at large. Still another effect of the book was the directing of public attention to its author; and in the year 1827, at the solicitation of three Boston churches, Mason removed to that city from his southern home.

Realizing the value of the alto of children's voices in a church choir and finding that this part was not usually sung or even attempted in Boston choirs, it became Mason's immediate object in connection with his musical directorship in the three churches to train a class of boys and girls, that the alto part might be properly added. Hence the first children's singing-school. This class as it began comprised but six or eight children: its increase was rapid, however, until it reached the number of between five and six hundred, being continued gratuitously for several years.

Although by 1829 Mason had achieved remarkable success as a teacher, he welcomed the Pestalozzian principles of education now brought to his attention by William C. Woodbridge, an American educator of high repute, well-known geographer and editor of the *American Annals of Education and Instruction*. Realizing that in this Inductive Method

of Instruction, so-called, there lay distinct advantages, Mason soon became the outstanding promulgator in this country of Pestalozzi's ideas, as set forth by his disciples, Pfeiffer, Kübler and Nägeli. He believed Pestalozzianism to be the "natural" method of teaching, and accordingly strove to replace the old, or then universal, plan of starting a pupil off with a complete tune and correcting mistakes as such occurred, with the more logical plan; a plan, in short, of "*building* up rather than *patching* up;" to wit, the Inductive Method.

At this period Mason's classes of children were heard in a series of concerts, demonstrating the fact that children *could* be taught singing, and, furthermore, that it was desirable they *should* be so taught. Public interest was aroused; and though it took some seven years for its accomplishment, vocal music through Mason's tireless efforts was finally introduced in 1838 into the public school system of Boston, and thence in time throughout the country. In the Annual Report, July 1, 1839, of the Boston Academy of Music, founded in 1833 by Mason and a group of influential citizens, Jacob Abbott, William C. Woodbridge, George J. Webb, Samuel A. Eliot and others, this action by the School Board was referred to as the "Magna Charta" of musical education in this country.

Notwithstanding the favorable attitude of the Boston School Committee in 1837 authorizing vocal music study in the common schools, the City Council failed to provide the necessary funds. As a further demonstration of the practicability of such instruction, however, Mason offered to give free instruction in one of the schools for a year. The offer being accepted, he taught in the Hawes Grammar School, Boston, for the season of 1837–38. The following autumn he was appointed superintendent of music in the Boston Schools, continuing in this position until 1845, when, because of political pressure brought to bear by two musicians who desired his position, he was forced to retire. Nevertheless, he continued teaching in one of the schools, the Winthrop School, during 1850–51.

Other cities soon followed Boston's lead, vocal music being added gradually to the common school curriculum of centers throughout various states.

In 1834, keenly sensing the then existing lack of properly qualified musical instructors and with the view of rectifying this unfavorable condition, Mason published his *Manual of the Boston Academy of Music for instruction in the elements of Vocal Music on the system of Pestalozzi.* The issuance of a book for teachers was indeed a novel idea at the time, yet its

adoption was immediate. Running into several editions, it became the widely used handbook of teachers and parents alike.

Closely following upon the appearance of the *Manual*, still another plan toward the same end was inaugurated; namely, classes for teachers—through the influence of which they should cultivate better methods of instruction. The first of these consisted of but twelve members. The number increased, however, from year to year, reaching an enrollment in 1850 of 1,176 men and women, representative of many sections of the country. As a result, the Academy of Music, under whose auspices the classes were held, received requests for professors, so that similar classes might be instituted in other cities as well, and this gave rise to the Musical Convention, so-called, which soon became an important factor in the progress of musical development. So impressed was Horace Mann, reformer of the Massachusetts Public School System, that he declared he "would walk fifty miles to see Lowell Mason teach, if he could not otherwise have that privilege."

One more medium for teacher-training, sponsored and developed by Mason, was the Musical Normal Institute, organized in New York City in 1853. Its sessions lasted throughout three months and its curriculum included musical theory, composition, instrumental and vocal training, and choral practice. In this movement Mason was joined by Thomas Hastings, George F. Root and William B. Bradbury, the latter two having been pupils of his, while students from all parts of the country attended. Thus, Mason's Teachers' Classes, Musical Conventions and Musical Normal Institutes provided the country for a quarter of a century with a majority of its well-trained music teachers.

Meanwhile Mason was prolific as a composer and arranger of music for the Church, also of songs for children. His published works, in some of which others collaborated with him, totaling sixty or more, included *The Juvenile Psalmist, or The Child's Introduction to Sacred Music*, 1829, the first music book ever published for Sunday schools; *The Juvenile Lyre*, 1831, the first book of secular school songs—in this country, at least; *Sabbath School Songs*, 1833; *The Juvenile Singing School*, 1837; *Mason's Young Minstrel*, 1837; *The Juvenile Songster*, 1838 (published in Boston and London simultaneously); *Little Songs for Little Singers*, 1840; *The Primary School Song Book, In Two Parts*, 1846; and *The Song Garden, Parts One, Two and Three*, 1864–66. Thus it is seen that the child, hitherto starved through lack of intelligi-

ble songs, was given the opportunity for self-expression through music—a new world of beauty being opened unto him.

And what were the principles upon which Lowell Mason vouchsafed to children this inestimable advantage? The child should find in the educative process pleasure and delight; be motivated through his own aroused interest, and through the realization of specific ends; teaching data should be so organized that the pupil proceeds from the known to the un-known, grasping the significance thereof step by step, one thing at a time; the occasional review of parts already learned and the significance of the parts so learned in their relation to the whole; the material at all times to be worth-while music and worth-while literature; the first steps should be by means of rote singing, followed by note reading of appealing songs, with especial care that the child's voice should not be forced. Since the success of the educational progress depends largely upon the teacher, he must not only be prepared for the work, from a musical point of view, educationally and morally, but likewise be ever attentive to his own development, and he should evince constant interest in the pupils themselves.

According to Lowell Mason's philosophy of education in music, while music should not be considered as an end in itself, its true function lies in the benefit it bestows upon the development of the whole personality; its educational value offers the means toward high human development through emphasis upon the student of a wholesome physical, intellectual and emotional objective. It is not so much the object of education to store the mind with knowledge as to discipline it. That person is not the best educated who has *learned* the *most*, but he who *knows best how to learn*. Music should be cultivated and taught not as a mere sensual gratification, but as a means of improving the affections, and of ennobling, purifying and elevating the whole man.

But during these years Mason was constantly composing and arranging church music as well, the chief medium of his musical expression being the hymn-tune. Beginning with *Hamburg* and the *Missionary Hymn*, in 1824, he composed with almost incredible facility. Many of his hymn-tunes, including several of those best known, date from the decade beginning with the year of his arrival in Boston, 1827, and particularly from the years 1830 and 1832. To the former, 1830, belong the spirited tune, *Laban*, for that hymn of Christian steadfastness by the Reverend George Heath, beginning:

My soul! be on thy guard;
Ten thousand foes arise;

and *Rockingham*, for the hymn, "My dear Redeemer and my Lord," called by Watts, its author, "The example of Christ;" and the tune, *Watchman*, of dignity and vigor, for the ringing missionary, Easter or Christmas hymn of Sir John Bowring,

> Watchman, tell us of the night,
> What its signs of promise are.

likewise the tune, *Hebron*, for Watts's "Thus far the Lord hath led me on;" and *Wesley*, for the stanzas by the Reverend Thomas Hastings,

> Hail to the brightness of Zion's glad morning,
> Joy to the lands that in darkness have lain!

Cowper, too, in memory of the poet William Cowper, its author, set to his hymn,

> There is a fountain filled with blood
> Drawn from Emmanuel's veins;

Uxbridge, likewise, in the spirit of a Gregorian Chant, for the hymn based on Psalm XIX,

> The heavens declare Thy glory, Lord!
> In every star Thy wisdom shines.

Of a few dating from 1832, mention may be made of *Boylston*, frequently sung to the Reverend John Fawcett's familiar verses, warm in brotherly feeling,

> Blest be the tie that binds
> Our hearts in Christian love;

and *Downs*, for William Cowper's "God moves in a mysterious way;" and *Olivet*, composed for and universally associated with Dr. Ray Palmer's hymn of prayer and triumphant confidence,

> My faith looks up to Thee,
> Thou Lamb of Calvary,
> Saviour Divine!

To complete the list would require many pages, but however brief a given list might be, it could not be adequate without including the tune, *Bethany*, written for and internationally sung to "Nearer, my God, to Thee."

Meanwhile, a succession of collections of church music came with remarkable rapidity from Mason's pen beginning in 1821 with *The Boston Handel and Haydn Society Collection of Church Music*, of which nineteen editions were issued, and ending with *The American Tune Book*, 1869, although he later collaborated with other men in editing various collections. These collections comprised many of Mason's several hundred hymn-tunes, though the total number of

his tunes will probably never be known. For, "although he had an honest love of approbation," as his pastor and friend the late Reverend George B. Bacon, has written,

> as all faithful workers have, he was not so eager for it as he was to have his work well done. He was willing, for example, to leave unclaimed much of the music which he introduced to general acceptance. It was his fashion to send out a tune anonymously, and to let it run awhile on its own merit. By-and-by he might claim it, but very often failed to do so. For many of his tunes he has no credit, and he did not care enough for his own fame to take the time (as he was urged to take it) to collect and recognize his works. So, too, with the service which he rendered to the English Churches of the Congregational order.

Regarding the contention sometimes raised that Lowell Mason formulated no positive principle and founded no school with definite limitations, we believe that he was too broad, too catholic, too practical, to bind himself down by any particular formulæ. He did have, nevertheless, two cardinal principles and to these the congregational tunes for the Church should conform: first, they should be such that all could sing them, their melodies should not exceed the limits of the average range of the human voice; and secondly, they should be the complement of the verses to which they were set, thus strengthening the meaning and the significance of the hymns themselves. His tunes at their best are expressed, first of all, by a spirit of devotion; they have vitality, the strength of simplicity and enduring qualities. Many of them, composed upwards of one hundred years ago, having stood the test of time, are today included in numerous, foremost hymn-and-tune books.

In 1837, after ten years of continuous labor, Lowell Mason visited Europe, partly for recreation, though more particularly to become acquainted first-hand with the methods—especially in Germany—of musical instruction in schools of different grades. He conversed with many teachers, witnessed demonstrations by their pupils; he heard much church music, attended numerous classical concerts, and met outstanding musicians and composers of the day—notably Mendelssohn, during a rehearsal of the oratorio, "St. Paul," at Exeter Hall, London.

Again, in 1851, now accompanied by his wife, he paid a second and more extended visit to Europe, devoting some fifteen months to England and the Continent. At London he gave courses of lectures on Music for the Church and Pestalozzianism; he directed congregational singing schools, and instituted elementary music classes for children. Having thus spent considerable time, pleasantly and industriously, he returned to America in April, 1853. Shortly following

his arrival, he recounted his foreign experiences in a volume, entitled, *Musical Letters from Abroad*, a book of charm and information, offering much of interest to this day. In its Preface he writes:

> There are many persons in different parts of our country, who are deeply interested in the subject of music, who are beginning to appreciate its value, and who are engaged in the cause of musical education, and especially in efforts for the improvement of church music; this is abundantly proved by the rapid spread of music in common schools, by the steadily growing demand for good instructors both in the vocal and instrumental departments, by the higher qualifications which from year to year are required in those who are sought for and employed as teachers, and by the constantly increasing number of associations and gatherings for musical purposes, as elementary classes, singing societies, choirs and musical conventions. It was for the gratification of these persons, and especially for the satisfaction of the author's numerous pupils and friends, that these very imperfect letters were originally written and published in various periodicals, and for these too they have been now collected and printed in a more convenient and permanent form. May they serve as a token of remembrance from the writer, and may they in their humble way add a little to the influence of those who, regarding music as an object worthy of human pursuit and cultivation, are exerting themselves for its improvement and universal diffusion.

Removing to Orange, New Jersey, some twelve miles distant from New York City, in the latter part of 1853, Mr. and Mrs. Mason established their new and final home at the beautiful estate, known as "Silverspring," on the gently rising slope of Orange Mountain. Here their elder sons sooned joined them, Daniel Gregory and Lowell, Jr., who in 1855 constituted the publishing firm, Mason Brothers, and whose general catalogue contained a number of their father's works. Between the sons' residence, called "Cosey Cottage," and that of their parents, a little stream flowed down from its never-failing source—a spring at the mountain-top. Widening in its course, and silvery in the sunshine, on and on it ran until at the foot of the mountain it formed a lily pond, over across the roadway near the stables. As on its way it passed the gardener's lodge, it seemed to pause, as it were, long enough to keep filled to the brim an inviting drinking trough at which pedestrians and horses might quench their thirst. Mr. and Mrs. Mason found much to enjoy in their new home; and here they welcomed from time to time numerous guests, clergymen, educators, former pupils and friends.

Doctor Mason (he was honored by the New York University with the degree of Doctor of Music, in 1855—among the first of its kind to be granted by an American university) at once took an active interest, as did his wife also, in the

religious and social life of the community. As a founder of the Orange Valley Church and superintendent of its Sunday school, the Doctor rejoiced in leading, as precentor, the musical service. Both he and Mrs. Mason devoutly aided in the church's spiritual welfare, as did likewise their son, Lowell, Jr., president of its Board of Trustees and one of its deacons, and also their gifted son, William, who for many years gave his services as organist. As senior deacon, Lowell Mason served the church from the time of its formation to the end of his days. Punctilious as to his engagements, it was his custom to return in time for the Sabbath, from New York City or more distant points to which he might have gone to lecture or engage in other activities. During the greater part of the Orange period he was busy as ever, editing books of music for children and for the Church, and contributing articles to American and English periodicals, composing hymn-tunes, anthems, motets and sentences, as well as conducting through an amanuensis an extensive correspondence. It was in 1858–59 that the three exhaustive volumes, *The Sabbath Hymn Book*, *The Sabbath Hymn and Tune Book* and *The Sabbath Tune Book*, first appeared, edited by Lowell Mason, in conjunction with Edwards A. Park and Austin Phelps, of the Andover Theological Seminary. One of his last compositions dates from 1871—an anthem, a musical setting for the verses:

> As the hart panteth after the water brooks,
> So panteth my soul after Thee, O God.

Lowell Mason's life of eighty years was a full and busy one. Fortunately he was blessed with a devoted helpmate. On September 17, 1817, he married Miss Abigail Gregory, of Westborough, Massachusetts. Together they lived happily for upwards of half a century, and to them were born four sons. Celebrating their Golden Wedding in 1867, they were gladdened by the presence of their children, their several grandchildren, their friends and neighbors, and their hearts were filled with thanksgiving to their Eternal Father for the exceeding goodness and blessings vouchsafed them.

But all that is mortal passeth away with time. On the evening of the Lord's Day, August 11, 1872, Lowell Mason peacefully breathed his last. Yet the inspiring influence of his life and work still lives. As he wrought for a better and brighter future, may it be given to us to carry on in the same spirit, to strive constantly for an ever fuller fruition of the salutary purposes for which he unceasingly, reverently labored!

THE PAPERS OF THE
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IX

Christian Hymns of the First Three Centuries

by

RUTH ELLIS MESSENGER, PH.D.

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Christian Hymns of the First Three Centuries

I. Introduction

There is no part of the general field of Christian hymnology so baffling to the student or so full of difficulties as the one under consideration in this paper. Many accounts of the subject are in existence but are far from conclusive. This is due, first of all, to the unexpected scarcity of original sources. When one views the rise of Christianity from its inception to the period of the Council of Nicæa, 325, its numerical growth from a handful of original adherents to millions of followers at the time of the Edict of Milan, 313, its literary development from early scattered records to the works of the great Greek and Latin fathers, one cannot help inquiring, "What has become of their hymns?"

Another puzzling aspect of the study is the complex historical background against which the progress of Christianity appears. The peace and constructive progress of the Augustan era, in which Christianity was founded, have often been cited as factors contributing to its evolution and spread. But this is not the whole story. The civilization of that day, especially in the eastern Mediterranean lands most concerned, was largely Hellenistic, of mingled Greek and oriental features which were necessarily wrought into the fabric of the new religion. An understanding of pre-Augustan conditions, in which these diverse historical and literary trends were merged, is essential, for without it the subject is unintelligible.

A further problem which confronts the student is that of interpretation. It is well known that any general treatment of early Christianity is apt to conform to the point of view of the author. The study of hymnology, like that of other features of the early Church, is apt to be affected by the opinion of the commentator.

It is no wonder that the field has been neglected and that the accounts of it are vague, incomplete and unsatisfactory. In fact, the task of re-examining the mass of extant records of early Christianity and other relevant material, which might illuminate the subject of hymnology, seems never to

have been undertaken with this purpose in view. It is, actually, too vast a project for the casual student and certainly has not been attempted here. Our best accounts of early Christian hymnody are often subordinated to a general history of Christian hymns. This is the case with the article, entitled, Hymnes, by H. Leclercq, in the *Dictionnaire D'Archéologie Chrêtienne et de Liturgie*, probably the best short account in any language, containing a section on the hymnology of the first three centuries.[1] Charles Stanley Phillips drew generously from this source for the first chapter of *Hymnody, Past and Present*, which is written from the liturgical standpoint.[2] Independent studies are rare. Among them, *Die Hymnendichtung des frühen Christentums* by Josef Kroll, a distinguished classical philologist, deserves a much wider circulation and should be translated for the benefit of English readers.[3]

In view of the dearth of available material in English, it has seemed timely to approach the whole subject from a new standpoint. In this study, the extant hymnic sources will be presented objectively. Groups of hymns will be used to illustrate the types current in the period. In connection with them, the related historical and literary influences will be noted.

Let us abandon at once our contemporary connotation of the word *hymn* which is derived ultimately from the hymns of Ambrose, 340–397, that is, a metrical lyric constructed in stanzas. In the pre-Ambrosian period Christian hymns were largely of the psalm type, to be chanted in rhythmic periods without rhyme. Not only should the word *hymn* be conceived in terms of ancient thought, but also the futile attempt to differentiate among psalms, hymns and canticles should be avoided. Specialists in liturgical matters testify to the confusion existing among ancient writers in the use of these words and to the uncertainty of definition which results.[4] It is better not to multiply difficulties but to hold fast to the actual texts which we know were used in Christian worship.

II. Old Testament Hymns

At the threshold of Christianity the student crosses from the literary environment of the Old Testament into that of

[1] H. LeClercq, "Hymnes," *Dictionnaire D'Archéologie Chrêtienne, etc.* (Paris, Letouzey, 1925), vol. 16, 2826–2928; Part I, *Hymnographie des trois premiers siècles*, 2826–2859.

[2] C. S. Phillips, *Hymnody, Past and Present* (London, S. P. C. K., 1937).

[3] J. Kroll, "Die Hymnendichtung des frühen Christentums," *Die Antike*, 2 (1926), 258–281.

[4] J. Mearns, *Canticles of the Christian Church* (Cambridge, Un. Press, 1914), 1; F. Cabrol, "Cantiques," *Dictionnaire D'Archéologie Chrêtienne, etc.*, vol. 2 (2), 1976.

the New. But in actual practice the Hebrew psalms were never given up, and to this day are treasured in every branch of the faith. In the early centuries they formed the bulk of Christian hymnody. References to their use appear throughout the New Testament and are familiar to all. And, moreover, the influence of the Hebrew psalms upon the composition of new hymns is apparent even in the Gospels.

Keeping these important facts in mind regarding the psalms, the student may pass on to other hymnic sources in the Old Testament. Many striking lyrical passages in the Hebrew scriptures, uttered or perhaps repeated in moments of emotional fervor, were used by later worshippers to express a similar attitude toward the Divine.[5] Among these may be cited the Songs of Moses,

I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously (*Ex. 15: 1–19*),

Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth (*Deut. 32: 1–43*);

Hannah's Song of Thanksgiving,

My heart rejoiceth in the Lord (*I Sam. 2: 1–10*);

the great hymns in the Book of Isaiah,

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts (*Isa. 6: 3*),

We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks (*Isa. 26: 1–21*),

the second part of which begins,

With my soul have I desired thee in the night (*Isa. 26: 9–21*);

Jonah's Song,

I cried by reason of my affliction unto the Lord (*Jonah 2: 2–9*);

the Song of Habbakuk,

O Lord, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid (*Hab. 3: 2–19*)

The apocryphal addition to the Book of Daniel, known as the Song of the Three Holy Children, may be considered with Old Testament lyrics. Comprising sixty-seven verses, it was added to *Daniel 3: 23*, but, strictly speaking, its date, author and original language are unknown. It is probable that it is of Hebrew authorship and belongs to the first century, B. C. Its use, however, is unquestioned.[6] The first part,

Blessed art Thou, O Lord of our fathers,

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[5] All biblical passages quoted in this paper are given in the *King James Version* of the English Bible.

[6] R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1913), vol. I, 627–629.

is the familiar *Benedictus es, Domine;* and the second part,

O all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord,

is the *Benedicite, omnia opera.*

The term *canticle,* mentioned above, has been applied in a general sense to such lyrics from the Old Testament and also from the New. "In practice," says James Mearns, "it means those Songs of Holy Scripture which have been selected for ecclesiastical use and are appended to, or incorporated with, the Psalter or other parts of the Divine Office."[7] Both Eastern and Western Churches early made official use of the Old Testament canticles,[8] while the Greek Church elaborated upon them in formal metrical compositions, called *canons,* or groups of *odes* based upon an acrostic structure, a distinctive feature of Greek hymnody from the seventh century.[9]

It was only natural that the hymnody of the Old Testament should have exerted a marked influence upon Christian practice. The Old Testament tradition was very strong. Familiar phraseology was ready at hand for the composition of new canticles which were often mere centos from the Psalms or other portions of the Hebrew scriptures. It should be recalled that Christianity not only arose in the Semitic environment but also was for some years localized chiefly in the oriental sections of the Roman Empire, and that it was affected by oriental ideas and modes of expression. Even after Greek and Roman influences were strongly felt, hymnology retained this traditional Semitic character and pagan lyrics were held in suspicion.

III. New Testament Hymns

The transition, therefore, to the canticles of the New Testament was easy and perhaps inevitable. The *Benedictus,*

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel (*Luke 1: 68–79*),

spoken by Zacharias, the *Nunc dimittis,*

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace (*Luke 2: 29–32*),

by Simeon, and above all the *Magnificat,*

My soul doth magnify the Lord (*Luke 1: 46–55*),

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[7] J. Mearns, *op. cit.* (see note 4), 1.

[8] F. Cabrol, *op. cit.* (see note 4), 1976–1977.

[9] J. Julian, *Dictionary of Hymnology* (London, John Murray, 1892), "Canons," 461, 463.

from the lips of the Virgin Mother, are among the most famous of early Christian hymns, which, together with the song of the angelic host at the birth of Jesus, the *Gloria in excelsis*,

Glory to God in the highest (*Luke 2: 14*),

appear within the Gospel narratives.

In the remaining portions of the New Testament other hymn fragments are found. Some of these are direct quotations from known sources.[10] In the *Book of Revelation* (*4: 8*), reference is made to the words of *Isaiah* (*6: 3*),

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty,

a passage which has survived in the Western Church in the expanded form of the *Tersanctus*, and in the Eastern Church as the *Hymnus Angelicus*. In the same Book (*Rev. 15: 3*), the Song of Moses (*Ex. 15: 1–10*) is recalled. Some passages are considered parts of familiar pieces otherwise unknown. The quotation in the *Epistle to the Ephesians*,

Awake thou that sleepest (*Eph. 5: 14*),

may fall into this group or be considered a free rendering of certain passages in Isaiah.[11] The "faithful sayings" from the Epistles to Timothy and to Titus have also been viewed in this light.[12] The passage opening

For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him (*II Tim. 2: 11–13*),

possesses a marked lyrical character. The lines beginning

Who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords (*I Tim. 6: 15–16*),

reveal poetic features of a generally oriental style, framing the Old Testament content. Certain digressions in the Epistles, in which formulas of belief or of praise rise to a sure and effective climax, have the qualities of sustained hymns:

God was manifest in the flesh,
justified in the Spirit,
seen of angels,
preached unto the Gentiles,
believed on in the world
received up into glory (*I Tim. 3: 16*),

Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:
who, when he was reviled, reviled not again;
when he suffered, he threatened not;— — — —(*I Peter 2: 22–25*),

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[10] Quotations from the Psalms are not included in this paper.

[11] C. H. Toy, *Quotations in the New Testament* (New York, Scribners, 1884), 199–200.

[12] E. F. Scott, *The Pastoral Epistles* (New York, Harper, no date), 14.

above all,

> Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God;
> But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant— — — —
> That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;
> And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (*Philippians 2: 6–11*).

Poetic refrains are obvious in the following:

> For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever (*Rom. 11: 36*),

> Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end (*Eph. 3: 21*),

> Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever (*I Tim. 1: 17*).

The Apostle Paul and other writers of the New Testament, who quote freely from a variety of sources, have used fragments of hymns to reinforce their teachings or with a devotional purpose. One gains from such citations a text only, or a fragment of text. Singing is not implied. The apocalyptic vision of the *Book of Revelation*, however, contains several magnificent hymns of praise which testify not alone to the form and content of the early hymn but also to the practice of worship in song. The praises of the heavenly host are mirrored in the praises of the congregation upon earth.[13] "And they sung a new song, saying,"

> Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof (*Rev. 5: 9–10*),

> Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing (*Rev. 5: 12–14*),

> Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever (*Rev. 7: 12*),

> Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints (*Rev. 15: 3–4*),

> Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth (*Rev. 19: 6*).

From the point of view of the evolution of Christian hymns, the hymns in the *Book of Revelation* are perhaps the most significant in the New Testament because they exhibit varied elements, from Judaism, from Christianity and from the mingling of the two.[14]

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[13] J. Kroll, *op. cit.* (see note 3), 264.

[14] M. Dibelius, *A Fresh Approach to the New Testament and Early Christian Literature* (New York, Scribners, 1936), 247.

It is interesting to re-read the New Testament in the search for hymns, but one should remember that the field is controversial. Some commentators would suggest that the entire 13th chapter of *I Corinthians* is a hymn, beginning,

> Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels.[15]

A moderate rather than an extreme position, however, upon the identity of hymn sources in the New Testament seems more likely to be productive of a genuine appreciation of the style, subject matter and number of primitive Christian hymns.

Traces of poetic improvisation, which is so closely allied to hymnody, must be seriously considered at this point. The art of improvisation belongs to no one age or country. It happens that the Greeks had practiced it for centuries and that illustrations exist from the time of Homer. To the Hellenized orient it was familiar. "The Greeks of Cilicia and of the region about Antioch and Tarsus," as Dr. George Dwight Kellogg reminds us, "seem to have cultivated the art and become famous." He also suggests that the "gift of tongues" refers to this art and that Paul himself possessed the poetic talent in no small degree.[16] It is only natural to assume that, among the early Christians, certain individuals would react to the influence of heightened emotion in outbursts of poetic expression. Passages in the *Book of Acts* may refer to the use of such hymns, for example, in the case of the Gentiles at Cæsarea, who "speak with tongues and magnify God" (*Acts 10: 45–46*), or the Ephesians who "spake with tongues, and prophesied" (*Acts 19: 6*), or perhaps the disciples on the Day of Pentecost (*Acts 2: 4*). Irenæus, a second century father of the Church and bishop of Lyons, referring to the scene at Pentecost, mentions the singing of a hymn on that occasion.[17] The nature of improvisations is fugitive. They arise from individual inspiration and, even if expressed in familiar phrases, are not remembered or recorded by the singer or hearer. To whatever degree improvisation played a part in early Christian hymnody, to that same degree we lack corresponding literary survivals. Possibly this is one explanation of the dearth of sources which we now deplore.

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[15] R. Reitzenstein, *Die Hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen* (Leipzig, Teubner, 1927), 3rd edition, 385.

[16] G. D. Kellogg, *The Ancient Art of Poetic Improvisation*, a paper read at the meeting of the Classical Association of the Atlantic States, April 26, 1940; J. Kroll, *op. cit.* (see note 3), 259.

[17] *Contra Hæreses*, III, xvii, 2; Migne (PG), VII, 929–930. For a recent commentator, see F. J. Foakes-Jackson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1931), 10–13.

On the whole, the hymnic evidence found in the New Testament points to a predominant Hebrew influence. Both in the use of psalms and other Old Testament hymns and in the phraseology of new hymns, the Christians found themselves more at home in the traditional forms of expression. Features of style, such as parallelism, uniformity and the repetition of words or word order, were not necessarily restricted to Hebrew poetry but might be found in other oriental sources—a consideration to which further attention will be given later.[18] Still we may assume that the influence of Judaism in form as well as subject matter was supreme.

IV. Liturgical Hymns

Christian practice reveals a third type of Hebrew influence, the liturgical, which brought about the use of the psalms in public worship, together with other elements familiar in the synagogue. At the close of a service of this kind, made up of prayers, readings, psalms and preaching, the eucharist was celebrated. Early writings, for example, the *Apologia* of Justin Martyr, 100?–165,[19] the *Didache*[20] and the *Apostolic Constitutions*,[21] testify to a somewhat fixed type of worship, which, varying in details, seems to foreshadow the liturgical models of the fourth century.

Briefly stated, the *Didache*, or *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, is a second century treatise, the second part of which includes a ritual of baptism, fasting and the eucharist.[22] A series of eucharistic prayers is here recorded, beginning, *Εὐχαριστοῦμέν σοι, πάτερ ἡμῶν*,

We thank Thee, our Father,

offered at stages of the communion ritual where we approach the heart of Christian worship.[23] At this point, hymn and prayer origins merge. Many Christians of our own day, perhaps the majority, regard the true hymn as a prayer offered in direct address to God. Throughout the history of Christian hymns the two forms of worship have overlapped or been identical. Hymn and prayer were also associated in ancient cults, and the chorus of a Greek drama offers an

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[18] Note the citation, *I Tim. 6: 15–16, supra*, p. 7, in which the repetition of the relative clause produces a stylistic effect.

[19] Justin Martyr, *Apologia pro Christianis*, 67; Migne (PG), VI, 430. Translation from *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (New York, Scribners, 1899), I, 14.

[20] *Didache*, xiv; Translation from *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, VII, 381.

[21] *Apostolic Constitutions*, II, lvii; Translation from *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, VII, 421–422.

[22] *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, VII, 371–376; *Catholic Encyclopedia*, IV, 779f; *Encyclopedia Britannica*, eleventh edition, VII–VIII, 209f.

[23] *Didache*, ix; Translation from *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, VII, 380.

illustration of the superb proportions which this act of worship may assume. Charles Stanley Phillips, who has recently translated anew the eucharistic prayer of the *Didache*, thinks of it as not a true hymn, but a source and model of hymnody.[24] Improvised eucharistic prayer was interrupted by congregational refrains which provided another opportunity for the evolution of hymns. As a matter of fact, in all ages, expressions of thanksgiving, attending the celebration of the eucharist, have inspired many of the finest hymns of the faith.

The *Apostolic Constitutions* is a manual in eight books, of ecclesiastical discipline, doctrine and worship, including the *Didache*.[25] Dating from the fourth or fifth century, more probably the fourth, it represents the practice of an earlier period well within the scope of this study and, in the opinion of Brightman, was compiled in Antioch or its neighborhood.[26] Since Greek was the prevailing language in the Christian world of that day, it became the liturgical language of early Christianity for the first three centuries. Even in Rome and other large cities of Italy, Greek was used. In Italy, with these exceptions and in the western provinces, Latin was employed, finally superseding Greek as the official language of the Western Church.[27]

The following hymns appear in the seventh book of the *Apostolic Constitutions:*

A morning hymn, Δόξα ἐν ὑψίστοις θεῷ, *Gloria in excelsis*,

Glory to God in the highest;[28]

an evening hymn, Αἰνεῖτε παῖδες,

Ye children praise the Lord,[29]

which includes Σοὶ πρέπει αἶνος, *Te decet laus*,

Praise becomes Thee,

and Νῦν ἀπολύεις τὸν δοῦλόν σου, *Nunc dimittis*,

Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace;

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[24] *Hymnody Past and Present*, 16–17.

[25] F. E. Brightman, *Liturgies, Eastern and Western* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1896), vol. I, *Introduction*, xvii-xxix.

[26] F. E. Brightman, *supra*, xxix; see also B. S. Easton, *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus* (Cambridge, Un. Press, 1934), 12.

[27] L. Eisenhofer, *Handbuch der katholischen Liturgik*, vol. I, *Allgemeine Liturgik* (Freiburg im B., Herder, 1932), 150–152.

[28] *Apostolic Constitutions*, VII, 47.

[29] *Supra*, VII, 48.

and a prayer at dinner, Εὐλογητὸς εἶ,

Thou art blessed, O Lord, who nourishest me from my youth.[30]

In the eighth book of the *Apostolic Constitutions* and also in the *Liturgy of St. James* we have the *Tersanctus*, Ἅγιος, ἅγιος, ἅγιος,

Holy, holy, holy.

In another part of the same *Liturgy* the *Trisagion* appears, Ὁ τρισάγιος ὕμνος,

Holy God, holy mighty, holy immortal,
Have mercy upon us.[31]

An evening hymn, Φῶς ἱλαρόν, Joyful light, is mentioned by Basil in the fourth century as very old. It was sung at vespers in the Eastern Church:[32]

O gladsome light, O grace
Of God the Father's face.[33]

Among ancient liturgical hymns the *Te deum* should be mentioned. It is attributed to Nicetas, Bishop of Remesiana in Dacia, and dated from the end of the fourth century. It appears to be a combination of three distinct parts. The first thirteen verses, or parts one and two, probably originated earlier than the fourth century and may have been inspired by Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, 200–258, who wrote in terms almost identical with the phrases of this early section, used of prophets, apostles and martyrs.[34]

Biblical sources, especially the canticles, now appear as liturgical hymns, either in their original form or in an enlarged version.[35] The use of canticles, more particularly in their variations, is of supreme interest to the hymnologist, because it offers a theory of the origin of Christian hymnody apart from liturgical interpolations or from the psalms. Clement of Rome urged the Corinthians to unite in the spirit of praise as expressed in the seraphic chorus of Isaiah's vision,

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts:
the whole earth is full of his glory,

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[30] *Supra*, VII, 49.

[31] Translations from *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, VII, 538, 544.

[32] *Liber de spiritu sancto*, xxix, 73; Migne (PG), XXXII, 205. See also J. Mearns, *op. cit.* (see note 4), 16.

[33] Translation by Robert Bridges, *Yattendon Hymnal* (London, Oxford Un. Press, 1920), no. 88.

[34] R. M. Pope. "Latin Hymns of the Early Period," *Theology*, 21 (1930), 159; *Catholic Encyclopedia*, "Te deum," XIV, 468–470; C. W. Douglas, *Church Music in History and Practice* (New York, Scribners, 1937), 158–160.

[35] F. Cabrol, *op. cit.* (see note 4), especially Part II, *Les cantiques anciens*, 1976–1977.

associating it with the praise of the angelic ministrants, "ten thousand times ten thousand," beheld by Daniel (*Dan. 7: 10*). The same hymn had been heard in the apocalyptic mysteries of the *Book of Revelation*. Very early it was incorporated in the liturgy of the eucharist, continuing an ageless form of the praise of God from the old dispensation into the new.

The evolution of the Great Doxology from the words of the angelic song,

> Glory to God in the highest,

to the *Gloria in excelsis* illustrates the expanding thought of the Church, corresponding to the growth of the Christian body within the culture of the Roman Empire. Again, the *Gloria* illustrates Hellenistic features of poetic style, bespeaking the oriental influences which had entered into Greek literature.[36] Note the repetition of the clauses,

> We praise thee, we bless thee, we worship thee, we glorify thee, we give thanks to thee for thy great glory,

of the invocation,

> O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father almighty,
> O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ;
> O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,

of the relative clause,

> That takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us.
> Thou that takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayer.
> Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy upon us,

of the pronoun,

> For thou only art holy; thou only art the Lord; thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father.

It is quite superfluous to analyze further the values of a poetic form which has helped to make the *Gloria* one of the truly magnificent Christian hymns of all ages.[37]

Postponing for the present a more detailed inquiry into stylistic origins, we may regard the group of liturgical hymns here presented as a source collection of the utmost importance. It reveals not only the continuity of the Old and New Testament hymnology but also the evolution of worship in song into the early Christian era. The fact that worship

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[36] E. Norden, *Agnostos Theos* (Leipzig, Teubner, 1913), 276.

[37] Translation from *Book of Common Prayer* (Prot. Epis. Church, U. S. A.), 84. Similar effects were apparent in *I Tim. 6: 15–16*, *I Tim. 3: 16*, *I Peter 2: 22–25*, quoted above.

was chiefly liturgical in this period and hymns were therefore liturgical appears an inevitable conclusion.

V. Contemporary Pagan and Heretical Hymns

Christianity expanded, as we have seen, in the environment of eastern Mediterranean culture. Its original heritage was that of Judaism, but within the first century it had entered upon the conquest of the Gentile world. As that conquest proceeded and the penetration of new ideas into pagan thought continued, a corresponding reaction of paganism upon the new faith took place. With the general aspects of this phenomenon all are familiar. It is significant here only in the field of lyrical expression. The period of pagan influence in the sense of an imprint from Greek and Roman literature is also the period of impact with pagan heretical ideas derived either from current philosophies or the practices of mystery religions.

Once more the chart and compass offered by the direct extant sources are the best guides through the cross currents of the literature in our possession. Representative pagan poetry must be examined, at least of a few general types, in order to establish what influence, if any, was exerted upon contemporary Christian hymns.

Regarding the classical influence, *per se*, a large number of Greek hymns were in existence when Christianity was founded,[38] and Roman lyrics were appearing in that very century. Paul was obviously acquainted with the Hymn of Cleanthes, a Stoic writer of the third century, B.C., for he quoted his words on the Areopagus. The original passage to which Paul refers has been translated as follows:

> Thee it is meet that mortals should invoke,
> For we Thine offspring are and sole of all
> Created things that live and move on earth
> Receive from Thee the image of the One.[39]

It is evident that the Christian hymns embedded in the books of the New Testament were not constructed after a classical model of this type. The influence of Old Testament poetry was too strong, the associations of paganism repellant and, moreover, the Greek poetry, familiar to the average man of that day, quite different. The older Greek hymns, such as the *Homeric Hymns*, the *Odes* of Pindar, the choruses of

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[38] K. Keyssner, *Gottesvorstellung und Lebensauffassung in griechischen Hymnus* (Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 1932). In his index Keyssner lists 72 known authors of all periods, 37 anonymous pieces (some fragments), and 22 magical formulæ or collections.

[39] E. H. Blakeney, *Hymn of Cleanthes* (London, S. P. C. K., 1921), 8.

Greek tragedy, were produced in the Hellenic or pre-Hellenic ages which had been followed by more than two centuries of Hellenistic culture. Dr. Edward Delavan Perry, writing of Hellenistic poetry, said, "Other forms of poetry, particularly the lyric, both the choral and the 'individual,' died out almost completely."[40]

There remain, then, only the extant hymns of the mystery cults. In spite of many references to the use of singing in connection with these religions, very few specimens of their hymns actually survive. The mystery religion was a sacramental religion "which stressed the approach to Deity through rite and liturgy after a severe probation and an oath pledging to secrecy."[41] The leading cults were those associated with Orpheus, the Magna Mater (Cybele) and Attis, Mithra, Serapis, Isis, Adonis, and especially the Eleusinian Mysteries, which flourished for twelve centuries, ending with their extinction by the Christians in 397.[42]

During the period under consideration in this study Isis was honored in all parts of the Græco-Roman world. An authentic hymn to Isis appears in the writings of Apuleius (b. 125), who describes a procession in honor of the goddess and gives the words of the chorus, closing,

> Thy divine countenance and most holy deity I shall guard and keep forever in the secret place of my heart.

Variants of the Isis cult hymn or hymns have been preserved in inscriptions; for example, a hymn of some fifty lines from Cyme in Æolia,

> I am Isis the sovereign of the whole land.[43]

Liturgical survivals of the cult of Mithra are almost unknown. Franz Cumont, the great student of Mithraism, quotes one hymn fragment only,

> Hail bridegroom, hail thou new light![44]

He is of the opinion, however, that the Manichæan song mentioned by Augustine, 354–430, affords some idea of Mithraic poetry. The song or hymn in question represents a chief divinity surrounded by twelve minor divinities,

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[40] E. D. Perry, Preface to A. Körte, *Hellenistic Poetry*, translated by J. Hammer and M. Hadas (New York, Col. Un. Press, 1929), vii.

[41] S. Angus, *Religious Quests of the Græco-Roman World* (New York, Scribners, 1929), 76.

[42] *Supra*, 77, 86, 87.

[43] *Metamorphoses*, xi, 25. Translation from S. Angus, *Mystery Religions and Christianity* (New York, Scribners, 1925), 240–241. For the hymn from Cyme see P. Roussel, "Un nouvel Hymne à Isis," *Revue des Études grecques*, 42 (1929), 138.

[44] Cited by Firmicus Maternus, *De errore profanarum religionum*, 20; Migne (PL), XII, 1025; F. Cumont, *Textes et Monuments Figurés relatifs aux Mystères de Mithra* (Bruxelles, Lamertin, 1899), vol. I, 313.

symbolizing the seasons, all clothed with floral tributes.[45] ~~Cumont also suggests that~~ hero hymns were in existence, celebrating the exploits of the ~~gods.[46]~~ The so-called *Liturgy of Mithra*, a magic formula not considered ~~by Cumont, con-~~ tains hymn fragments, one of which begins,

> Lord, hail, potentate of the water,
> hail, ruler of the earth,
> hail, potentate of the spirit.[47]

Hippolytus, a presbyter of Rome who died in 236, in his *Refutation of all Heresies*, quotes certain hymns in praise of Attis:

> Whether thou art the race of Saturn or happy Jupiter,

and

> I will hymn Attis, son of Rhea.[48]

Here, as in so many cases, our information concerning pagan hymns is derived from an opponent, a Christian writer and defender of orthodox religion, but this circumstance in no way affects the validity of the text.

For the Orphic cult which had the longest period of influence, we possess what may be termed a hymn book containing eighty-seven hymns. It has been variously dated from the third century, B.C., to the fourth or fifth century, A.D. With a mental reservation as to the relevancy of the citations, we find that some of these hymns in praise of the gods are full of dignity, for instance,

> Mother of Gods, great nurse of all, draw near,
> Divinely honored, and regard my prayer.[49]

So debatable is the subject of the Orphic hymns, both in respect to date and usage, that they offer little or no assistance to the student who is interested in a possible influence upon Christian hymnology.[50]

Sooner or later, one must turn to the land of Egypt, if one desires a complete picture of early Christian culture. The

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[45] *Contra Faustum*, xv, 5; Migne (PL), xlii, 307.

[46] Cumont, *op. cit.* (see note 44), 302.

[47] A. Dieterich, *Eine Mithrasliturgie* (Leipzig, Teubner, 1923), 14; Translation from S. Angus, *op. cit.* (see note 43), 241.

[48] *Philosophumena*, V, iv; *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte, Hippolytus*, vol. iii, edited by Paul Wendland (Leipzig, Hinrich, 1916), 99–100. Translation from *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, V, 56–57.

[49] T. Taylor, *The Mystical Hymns of Orpheus* (London, Dobell and Reeves & Turner, 1896), 63.

[50] J. Geffcken, *Der Ausgang des griechisch-römischen Heidentums* (Heidelberg, Winter, 1929), 18; M. Hauck, *Die hymnorum Orphicorum aetate* (Dissertation, Breslau, 1911); O. Kern, *Die Herkunft des Orphischen Hymnenbuch* in *Carl Robert zum 8. März 1910 Genethliakon* (Berlin, Weidmann, 1910).

mystery of the Egyptian Isis, mentioned above, was one element in the background of the times, illustrative of the religious syncretism which had been fostered throughout the Ptolemaic period. The identification of the Egyptian Thot with the Greek Hermes is reflected in the Hermetic literature of which the *Poimandres* is the oldest known writing.[51] From this source a hymn of praise is derived:

> By thy blessing my spirit is illumined,

and a thanksgiving hymn,

> Holy is God, the Father of all the universe.[52]

Summarizing the Greek influence, both Hellenic and Græco-oriental, upon Christian hymnology, it is difficult, if not impossible, to trace any connection between the classic Greek hymns or the hymns of mystery cults, and those of the new faith. If more sources were available, a valid conclusion might be reached. At present, a tentative conclusion involves the recognition of the vigorous protest and revolt against pagan ideas revealed in contemporary prose writings, in turn evoked by the actual pressure which was exerted upon Christianity by alien cults. The twentieth century has produced an impressive literature centered about the mystery religions and the problem of their influence upon Christianity; but in the field of hymnology there have been discovered only the faintest of traces. These are wholly stylistic. Christian hymns which reveal the characteristics of the repetition of direct address, or of relative clauses or predicates, previously mentioned, illustrate poetic forms which are, in the final analysis, oriental rather than Greek.[53]

It is a satisfaction to the classicist, who is interested in the history of this subject, that the classical meters, ignored at this period, were destined to be revived at a later date. They were used to some extent from the fourth century. It was reserved for the court poets of the Carolingian circle of the ninth century to restore the old lyric meters. The Sapphic meter in its Horatian form not only was a favorite among medieval Latin hymn writers, but also it has found an occasional imitator in the course of the centuries even to modern times.[54]

While hymn sources derived from oriental cults are ex-

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[51] R. Reitzenstein, *Poimandres* (Leipzig, Teubner, 1904), 59, 347f.

[52] Translations from S. Angus, *Mystery Religions and Christianity*, 241–242.

[53] Phillips, *Hymnody Past and Present*, 13.

[54] *Ut queant laxis resonare fibris* (Paulus Diaconus, d. 799); *Herzliebster Jesu, was hast du verbrochen* (Johann Heerman, 1630); *Where is the Friend for whom I'm ever yearning* (Johann Wallin, 1779–1839).

tremely scanty, those originating in Gnosticism are much more numerous and suggestive in their relation to Christian hymnology. Gnosticism is not so much the name of a particular philosophy or definite system of belief, as it is a point of view, which sought to harmonize the speculative achievement of Greek thought with the oriental myths and with Christian teachings. The philosophical interpretation of pagan mythology was extended to Hebrew and Christian tradition. Thus, in accordance with the tenets of Neoplatonism, the primeval being has produced the universal mind and, in turn, mind has produced the soul which in contact with evil phases of matter has lost its original purity. Therefore, the soul must retrace its steps until it reaches the final stage of reunion with the origin of all being. It is easy to understand how a variety of meanings may be read into a simple statement like the above. It is also easy to understand that the possibilities of confusion arising in the first three centuries of Christian history were matters of the utmost concern to contemporary Christian writers and dogmatists. The period abounded in heresies and misunderstandings, to the discussion of which the ablest minds of the Church were devoted. Quotations from these authors furnish many of the extant hymns composed by Gnostics, either within or without the Christian fold. The range of literary excellence, of spiritual connotation and of intelligibility of subject matter in the so-called Gnostic hymns is so wide that it is difficult to evaluate them. To the modern reader they vary from the mere rigmarole to the genuinely inspiring hymn.

Perhaps the best known and certainly one of the loftiest expressions of Gnostic ideas is the *Hymn of the Soul*, which is found in the Apocryphal *Acts of Thomas*. Dating from the first half of the third century, the *Acts of Thomas* recounts the missionary preaching of the Apostle Thomas in India. While in prison, he chants this hymn, beginning,

> When I was an infant child in the palace of my father.[55]

It has no connection with the narrative but relates in allegorical fashion the return of the soul, which has been awakened from its preoccupation with earthly matters, to the higher state of heavenly existence. Here is a theme congenial to Christian thought and orthodox in its theology when extri-

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[55] *Acts of Thomas*, IX, 108. Translation from M. R. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1924), 411. See also B. Pick, *The Apocryphal Acts* (Chicago, Open Court Pub. Co., 1909), 312.

cated from the popular concepts of the times.[56] The actual authorship of the *Hymn of the Soul*, which is found in the Syriac version of the *Acts* alone, is unknown, but it has been attributed to some disciple of the Syrian Bardesanes, a Christian Gnostic who lived in the second half of the second century.[57] There seems to be no doubt that Bardesanes was himself influential as a hymn writer and that he was representative of a group of poets who were beginning to employ contemporary rhythms set to melodies familiar in daily secular life.[58]

The *Acts of Thomas* contains a second hymn,

The damsel is the daughter of light,

a poem of oriental imagery, personifying the divine wisdom as a bride.[59]

The apocryphal *Acts of John*, dating from the middle of the second century, yields a third hymn, the *Hymn of Jesus*. In the Gospel narrative of the last supper, Jesus and his disciples, before going to the Mount of Olives, sing a hymn together. It is not identified but is generally believed to be a part of the *Hallel* or group of Passover Psalms, 113-118. The writer of the *Acts of John* represents Jesus as using a new hymn which opens,

Glory be to Thee, Father.

It contains a long series of antitheses, as follows:

I would be saved and I would save,
I would be loosed and I would loose,
I would be wounded and I would wound,
I would be borne and I would bear, etc.

The hymn concludes,

A way am I to thee, a wayfarer.[60]

Variants of the *Hymn of Jesus* are extant, one of which has been preserved by Augustine, the Hymn of the Priscillianists, which came to him from a correspondent in Spain.[61]

Hippolytus, whose *Refutation of all Heresies* has been mentioned in another connection, discusses the Gnostic sect of the Naasenes. He quotes one of their hymns, beginning,

The world's producing law was Primal Mind,

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[56] According to Pick *op. cit.* (see note 55), 312, it is a Gnostic development of *Phil. 2: 5–11.*

[57] O. Bardenhewer, *Patrology*, translated from the 2nd edition by T. J. Shahan (Freiburg im B., Herder, 1908), 107.

[58] J. Kroll, *op. cit.* (see note 3), 270.

[59] Acts of Thomas, I, 6. Translation from M. R. James, *op. cit.* (see note 55), 367.

[60] Acts of John, 94, 95. Translation from M. R. James, *op. cit.* (see note 55), 228, 253.

[61] Augustine, *Epistula* ccxxxvii; Migne (PL), xxxiii, 1034. See also Leclercq, *op. cit.* (see note 1), 2841.

in which Jesus is represented as the guide of mankind to the attainment of celestial knowledge.[62] The system of Valentinus, a Gnostic leader, is also discussed and a psalm of his authorship is quoted:

> I behold all things suspended in air by spirit,

a didactic presentation of Gnostic thought.[63] It is composed in dactylic meter, affording another illustration of the adoption of popular rhythms in the hymnology of the heretical sects. A Gnostic hymn to the Highest God from a third century Coptic source may be cited:

> Thou art alone the eternal and
> thou art alone the deep and
> thou art alone the unknowable, etc.[64]

Whatever impression may be created upon the modern mind by the perusal of Gnostic poetry, its influence was admitted by contemporary Christians and combatted by every means in their power. The Gnostic leaders, unhampered by Hebrew traditions of religious poetry, were able to make use of popular forms and popular concepts. They met the trend of the times more than halfway. Heretical groups of all varieties of opinion were using hymns as a means of expressing their beliefs and persuading possible adherents. At the opening of the fourth century, Arius appeared, the leader of the group whose theology was rejected at the Council of Nicæa, 325, and whose hymns were met and overcome by the verses of Ambrose. Such was the influence of heretical upon orthodox hymnody.

VI. Early Christian Hymns

Turning once more to the authentic Christian hymns of the first three centuries and this time omitting those which appear in liturgical sources, we observe three distinct linguistic groups, the Syriac, the Greek and the Latin.

The most familiar of the Syriac hymns were written by Ephraem Syrus (b. 307), who strove to counteract the influence of the Gnostic poets, especially that of his countryman, Bardesanes. Strictly speaking, he belongs to the first half of the fourth century but should be considered by the student who is tracing the continuity of this subject. His hymns are metrical in the sense of having lines with a

[62] *Philosophumena*, v, 5; Text, *op. cit.* (see note 48), 102. Translation from *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, V, 58.

[63] *Philosophumena*, vi, 32; Text, *op. cit.* (see note 48), 167. Translation from *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, V, 91.

[64] E. Norden, *op. cit.* (see note 36), 69.

fixed number of syllables and strophic divisions. An Easter hymn opens thus:

Blessed be the Messiah
Who has given us a hope
That the dead shall rise again.

A hymn for the Lord's Day begins,

Glory be to the good
Who hath honoured and exalted
The first day of the week.[65]

It is possible that the hymns of Ephraem were influenced by the Syriac Odes of Solomon, discovered in 1909, which were produced in the first century. Whether the *Odes* themselves are of Gnostic or Christian origin cannot be definitely asserted but the probability of the latter is strong. For a full discussion of this most interesting but highly controversial topic the work of special commentators must be consulted.[66] The intrinsic interest of the collection demands more than a passing comment. *Ode VI* opens,

As the hand moves over the harp and the strings speak,
So speaks in my members the Spirit of the Lord, and I speak by His love.[67]

Ode IX,

Open your ears
And I will speak to you,
Give me your souls,
That I may also give you my soul.[68]

Ode XXIX,

The Lord is my hope:
In Him I shall not be confounded
For according to His praise He made me,
And according to His goodness even so He gave unto me.[69]

Ode XXXI, in which Jesus speaks,

6. Come forth, ye that have been afflicted
and receive joy
7. And possess your souls by grace;
and take to you immortal life.
8. And they condemned me when I rose up,
me who had not been condemned.
9. And they divided my spoil
though nothing was due to them.[70]

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[65] H. Burgess, *Select Metrical Hymns and Homilies of Ephraem Syrus* (London, Blackader, 1853), 77, 83.

[66] J. R. Harris & A. Mingana, *The Odes and Psalms of Solomon*, vol. I, *Text;* II, *Translation* (Manchester, Un. Press, 1916–1920), II, 69, 187–189, 197; J. R. Harris, *Odes and Psalms of Solomon* (Cambridge, Un. Press, 1909), 1–15; M. Dibelius, *op. cit.* (see note 14), 248–251; J. Kroll, *op. cit.* (see note 3), 265–268.

[67] Harris & Mingana, *Odes and Psalms of Solomon*, II, 232.

[68] *Supra*, 259.

[69] *Supra*, 362.

[70] *Supra*, 369.

Forty-two in number, the *Odes* reveal a true inspiration, novel and significant from the religious and the literary standpoint. They preserve the tradition of the Old Testament hymns, yet breathe the spiritual life of the new revelation. Their chief interest lies in the possibility that they illustrate a valid Christian poetry of a very early date. If it is true, as the editors suggest, that the *Odes* emanate from Antioch,[71] we have further evidence of the spirit of worship in that city with which early Christian liturgical forms are so closely associated.

The tradition of Syriac hymnody, of which these illustrations alone may be given from the early period, did not come to an end as Christianity moved westward. It was continued through thirteen centuries and is preserved in the Nestorian and other branches of the Syrian Christian Church.

Before the main stream of hymnody in the Greek language is traced, two sources from the second century will serve as an introduction. The first of these is the *Epistle to Diognetus*, by an unknown author, possibly a catechumen of the Pauline group.[72] It contains four selections, biblical in their phraseology, the first three of which express the redemptive mission of the Son of God:

> As a king sends his son who is also a king, so sent He Him,
> He did not regard us with hatred nor thrust us away,
> He, being despised by the people.

The fourth admonishes the Christian to union with the mind of God,

> Let your heart be your wisdom.[73]

The second source is a passage from a sermon on *The Soul and Body*, written by Melito of Sardis, a bishop and philosopher who was martyred in 170. The author pictures all creation aghast at the crucifixion of Jesus, saying,

> What new mystery then is this?
> The Judge is judged and holds his peace;
> The Invisible one is seen and is not ashamed;
>
> . . .
>
> The Celestial is laid in the grave, and endureth!
> What new mystery is this?[74]

Whether admissible as a hymn or not, this passage blends, in a most striking way, oriental and Greek elements employed in the expression of Christian belief.

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[71] *Supra*, 69.

[72] *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, I, 23.

[73] Chapters vii, ix, x, xii. Translation from *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, I, 27, 28, 29, 30.

[74] Translation from *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, VIII, 756.

Authentic Greek hymnody begins with Clement of Alexandria, 170–220. He is the author of a work of instruction for catechumens, the *Pædagogus*, to which is appended a *Hymn to Christ the Savior*, Ὕμνος τοῦ σωτῆρος Χριστοῦ, beginning, Στόμιον πώλων. It is a hymn of praise and thanksgiving on the part of those newly received into the Church. Christ is addressed in the familiar oriental imagery of the guide and shepherd, but the theme is rendered in a poetic style, which, by the use of short lines and the anapest, heightens the effect of ecstatic devotion.

Bridle of colts untamed,
    Over our wills presiding;
Flight of unwandering birds,
    Our flight securely guiding,— — — —[75]

The modern adaptation of Clement's hymn, *Shepherd of Tender Youth*, by Henry M. Dexter, 1846, while preserving in a measure the spirit of this piece, in no way reproduces the original. The Στόμιον πώλων of Clement is representative of a theme which pervades Christian hymnody in all ages, the joy and enthusiasm of the initiate or the admonition and encouragement addressed to the Christian who stands upon the threshold of a new life. The *Odes of Solomon* have been interpreted in these terms.[76] Again, the theme is preserved in the so-called Amherst papyrus, which consists of a hymn of twenty-five tripartite lines, a catechism or liturgy for the newly baptized. Originating in the third century, it appears in fragmentary form but sufficiently complete to make clear its language and purport, as illustrated in the following:[77]

That thou mayest receive life eternal
    Thou hast escaped the hard law of the unjust . . .

. . .

Seek to live with the saints, seek to receive life,
    Seek to escape the fire.
Hold the hope that thou hast learnt. The day that
    the master has appointed for thee is known to no man.

. . .

Tell the glad tidings unto children saying: the poor
    have received the kingdom, the children are the inheritors.[78]

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[75] Poetical translation from *Ante-Nicene Christian Library* (Edinburgh, Clark, 1867), IV, 343, by William Wilson. A familiar poetical translation is found in B. Pick, *Hymns and Poetry of the Eastern Church* (New York, Eaton & Mains, 1908), 21.

[76] Harris & Mingana, *op. cit.* (see note 66), 187.

[77] B. F. Grenfell & A. S. Hunt, *Amherst Papyri* (London, Frowde, 1900–1901), 23; Leclercq, *op. cit.* (see note 1), 2853f.

[78] Translation from P. D. Scott-Moncrieff, *Paganism and Christianity* (Cambridge, Un. Press, 1913), 83–84.

The Amherst papyrus is a part of the new store of knowledge from antiquity which has been opened up within recent years by the discovery and study of papyri. This branch of archæology and palæography has made available new fields of research in the study of early Christianity hitherto unfamiliar. In 1920, among the Oxyrhynchus papyri was discovered a fragment of a Christian hymn. It appears on the back of a strip which records a grain account of the first half of the third century. The hymn has a musical setting, the earliest example of Christian church music extant. The fragment consists of the conclusion only, so that the length and subject matter of the hymn as a whole are unknown. Creation is enjoined to praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost, in the form of a doxology. The meter is anapestic and purely quantitative.[79]

The *Hymn of Thekla*, Ἄνωθεν παρθένοι, appears in the *Banquet of the Ten Virgins*, a work of Methodius, Bishop of Olympus and Patara in Lydia, who was martyred at Chalcis in 312. It is a hymn of twenty-four stanzas sung by Thekla, each followed by a refrain sung by the chorus,

> I keep myself pure for Thee, O Bridegroom, and holding a lighted torch I go to meet Thee.[80]

Once more, a traditional theme in Christian hymnody is set forth, familiar from biblical as well as classical connotations and perpetuated either in the praise of virginity or in the form of the mystic union of Christ and the Church.

It is customary in presenting the subject of Greek hymn writers to pass from Clement of Alexandria to Gregory of Nanzianzus and Synesius of Cyrene, poets of the fourth century who mark the beginning of a new era beyond the limits of this study. They are mentioned here only as a reminder of the long succession of great poets who created and maintained Greek hymnody throughout the ancient and medieval centuries.

Contemporary with the development of Greek hymns, the literature of the Church was moving toward its destination in Latin culture. As Latin became a liturgical language the service hymns, already cited, appeared in their Latin form. Perhaps this is one reason why the production of original Latin hymns was so long postponed. It was not until the

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[79] B. F. Grenfell & A. S. Hunt, *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, Pt. XV (London, Oxford Un. Press, 1922), no. 1786, 21–22; also Preface.

[80] Συμπόσιον τῶν δέκα παρθένων, xi, 2; Migne (PG), XVIII, 207–214; Translation from *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, VI, 351.

middle of the fourth century that the hymns of Hilary of Poitiers, the first Latin hymn writer, appeared. His authentic hymns are three in number:

O Thou who dost exist before time

is a hymn of seventy verses in honor of the Trinity,

The Incarnate Word hath deceived thee, (Death)

an Easter hymn, and

In the person of the Heavenly Adam,

a hymn on the theme of the temptation of Jesus.[81] Hilary, like his Greek contemporaries, stands at the beginning of a new era, but it was Ambrose, and not he, who inaugurated the tradition of the medieval Latin hymn.

So far no mention has been made of the fact that the early period of Christian history was characterized by persecution. As a rule sporadic and intermittent, it was periodically severe. At all times Christians, if not actually persecuted, were objects of suspicion to the Roman government. We owe to the official zeal of Pliny the Younger, who was a proconsul in Bithynia in 112, our first glimpse of Christian worship from the point of view of the outsider. In a letter to the Emperor Trajan on the subject of the Christians, he says that, as a part of their service at sunrise, they chanted a hymn, antiphonally, to Christ as a God.[82] Speculation as to the identity of this hymn has never ceased among students. Leclercq summarizes the theories as follows: It is a morning hymn later attributed to Hilary. It is the morning hymn of the Greek liturgy. It is the morning hymn of the *Apostolic Constitutions*. It is the Great Doxology.[83] Since they are all unsatisfactory as identifications, we remain in ignorance on this point. A recent study of Pliny's letter by Casper J. Kraemer, a classicist, proposes the translation of the words *carmen dicere*, "to chant a psalm."[84] This most interesting suggestion is in thorough harmony with our knowledge of the continuity of the use of the psalms in public worship at this time.

VI. Conclusion

Reviewing the total pagan influence, both Greek and Latin, upon Christian hymnody, it must be understood that,

[81] W. N. Myers, *The Hymns of Saint Hilary of Poitiers in the Codex Aretinus* (Philadelphia, Un. of Penn., 1928), 12, 29, 53, 67. For a discussion of other hymns attributed to Hilary see *supra*, p. 14 and A. S. Walpole, *Early Latin Hymns* (Cambridge, Un. Press, 1922), 1–4.

[82] *Epistulae*, x, 96.

[83] Leclercq, *op. cit.* (see note 1), 2837–2838.

[84] C. J. Kraemer, "Pliny and the Early Church Worship," *Classical Philology* 29 (1934), 293–300.

in comparison with Semitic pressure in its wider implication, as well as the strictly Hebraic, pagan influence was relatively slight. It was a matter of centuries before the Hebrew psalms were permitted any rivals whatever in the usage of worship, except other biblical citations or such poems as might be produced by unquestioned churchmen. Even these were sparingly used, for *psalmi idiotici*, as the novel and original compositions were called, were forbidden by the Church and a new hymnody was thus stifled at its very birth. In a period of confusion marked by the rival use of hymns on the part of the orthodox and non-orthodox, it was felt that worship must be safeguarded. Only after the appearance of the modern vernacular languages in Europe in the period of the ninth century, when the liturgy had been set apart in the Latin tongue, was any real freedom permitted in the composition of new hymns. By that time the clergy were the poets and Latin their chosen medium of expression.[85]

By the time of Ambrose in the fourth century, however, Greek and oriental elements had long since merged in other aspects of civilization and, in the course of time, Christian hymns felt the effect of a universal development. There was a certain departure from biblical models and an emancipation from the old poetic forms in favor of the trend toward accent and rhyme. After all, a new religion had come into existence which demanded an authentic expression of a spiritual aspiration beyond that of the Old Testament models, just as Isaac Watts in the eighteenth century turned from the tradition of psalmody to an original presentment of the new revelation in Christ.

Are we to suppose that the Christians in the Mediterranean world of the first three centuries, representing the average inhabitant of these lands, had no hymns except those cited above? Or others like them? If they had, we are unacquainted with them. It is fair to assume that secular poetry and music eventually exerted an influence upon hymnody. At least the beginning of such influence was apparent in the adoption of popular meters by heretical poets, as well as by the orthodox.[86] Later, Ambrose perpetuated aspects of popular verse and perhaps music as well.[87] But there is no evidence at hand to support the assumption of a

[85] H. F. Muller, "Pre-History of the Mediæval Drama," *Zeitschrift f. romanische Philologie* 44 (1924), 544–575.

[86] J. Kroll, *op. cit.* (see note 3), 273–274.

[87] E. Norden, "Die Literatur," in *Vom Altertum zur Gegenwart* (Leipzig, Teubner, 1921), 41–49.

popular hymnody enjoyed either in connection with worship or independently of it.

The problem of music is outside the province of this paper but is involved in any serious study of hymnology at any period of its development. Here the student is almost totally at a loss for manuscript evidence bearing musical notation from the primitive period. The Oxyrhynchus hymn is a solitary example.[88] This does not mean that the subject is altogether obscure. Many statements about Christian practice, inspired by biblical precedent, are found in patristic literature. The traditions both of Hebrew music and of the early Church are well known. It seems clear that melody only was employed and that it was, for the most part, unaccompanied. Instrumentation was opposed and forbidden in public worship of a liturgical nature.[89]

No student can leave the consideration of early Christian hymnology without a sense of defeat. The past cannot be forced to yield the hidden knowledge of which it is the custodian. Sources are very scanty, especially in proportion to other literary remains of early Christianity. Specifically, there is no collection of hymns in existence which might correspond to a modern hymnary. On the contrary, isolated examples or groups appear from place to place and from time to time in varied forms. But in one respect our evidence is sure, if not complete. Springing from the culture and the vicissitudes of the age, Christian hymns of the early Church, as in every other stage of its development, not only express the spiritual aspiration of the time but also respond to the challenge of a new day.

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[88] Grenfell & Hunt, *op. cit.* (see note 79), 22. There are 8 recognizable notes in the Diatonic Hypolydian key of Alypius. The mode is Hypophrygian or Iastian.

[89] J. Quasten, *Musik und Gesang in den Kulten der heidnischen Antike und christlichen Frühzeit* (Münster im W., Aschendorff, 1930), ch. iv.

THE PAPERS OF THE
HYMN SOCIETY

CARL F. PRICE *Editor*

X

Addresses at the Twentieth Anniversary of the Hymn Society of America

THE HYMN SOCIETY OF AMERICA
NEW YORK CITY
1943

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1930-1955

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Addresses at the Twentieth Anniversary of the Hymn Society of America

Four meetings marked the celebration of the Twentieth Anniversary of the Hymn Society of America in New York City, Sunday and Monday, November 15 and 16, 1942: on Sunday afternoon a worship service in St. Bartholomew's Church, with music under the direction of Dr. David McKay Williams and a sermon by the Rev. Dr. Howard Chandler Robbins; on Monday morning, a public meeting in the Methodist Building; on Monday afternoon a public forum with addresses in the Marble Collegiate Church; on Monday evening a dinner at the Town Hall Club.

1. SERMON

HOWARD CHANDLER ROBBINS, D.D.

St. Bartholomew's Church, Sunday Afternoon

"For the masters of melody who have been the interpreters and deliverers of our spirits and the teachers of thy truth, we praise thee, O God, and give thanks. Grant us an echo of the melody that abides." (Joseph Fort Newton.)

The Hymn Society of America was founded in 1922 by Miss Emily S. Perkins, together with a small group of her friends, in her Riverdale home. Mr. Carl F. Price, one of the founders of the Society, was the first president. Among the objectives of the Society the most important have been to cultivate a wide congregational use of the better Christian hymns and hymn-tunes, and to encourage the writing and publishing of hymns that express the spirit and needs of modern Christian life and thought. To achieve these objectives, hymn festivals have been held in different sections of the country, prizes for hymns have been offered in hymn contests, hymnodic data have been collected, and papers written by the members of the Society have been issued. Of the members of the Society who have died there are names which at an Anniversary Service such as this should be gratefully commemorated: Miss Perkins, the founder of the Society and its most eminent benefactor; Mr. Augustus Newman, who bequeathed to the Society his notable hymnological library; Dr. Milton S. Littlefield, editor of *Hymns of the Christian Life;* Dr. William C. Covert and Dr. Calvin W. Laufer, who were editors-in-chief of the present hymnal of the Presbyterian Church; Dr. Louis F. Benson, one of the greatest of American scholars in hymnology, whose remarkable library was given to his alma mater, Princeton Theological Seminary; Dr. Oliver Huckel of Greenwich, whose contributions to corporate worship have made him known and loved by multitudes who have used them. The very utterance of these names of our former colleagues answers our prayer for "an echo of the melody that abides."

In looking over our important hymnals, one is impressed by the number of new hymns which they contain, meaning by "new" hymns which

have been written since the turn of the century. For example, the interdenominational *New Church Hymnal*, edited by Dr. H. Augustine Smith, contains ninety twentieth century hymns out of a total of 492; and the revised *Hymnal* of the Protestant Episcopal Church will contain 102 twentieth century hymns (including translations) out of a total of 586.

What, perhaps, is even more important, the present century has witnessed the revision of the hymnals of most of the leading denominations in this country, in Canada and in England, and in practically every case the revised hymnals surpass in strength, in dignity, in literary merit, and in contemporaneousness with the thought and sympathy of the present religious world the books which they have superseded. Canon Percy Dearmer once remarked grimly that "if we want the men of our day to come to church, the first thing that we must do is to throw our hymnals out of the window." That drastic remedy would have meant throwing the innocent babe of religious feeling out with the soapy bathwater of sentimentalism and literary mediocrity. Dr. Dearmer himself did not do that. On the contrary, he helped to edit a revised edition of *The English Hymnal*, and after that he was editor-in-chief in bringing out the most original, modern and challenging hymn-book that England had ever seen, *Songs of Praise*. It was eagerly welcomed. An abridged edition for use in schools soon went into its 295th thousand.

In the western hemisphere a parallel movement soon began. The United Church of Canada came into existence in 1925. Its *Hymnary*, issued in 1930, represents converging lines of Methodist and Presbyterian hymnody, and has preserved and increased the wealth of both traditions. In this country *The Presbyterian Hymnal* was revised in 1933, and it is now one of the most distinguished hymnals in the English-speaking world. *The Methodist Hymnal*, the official hymn book of the recently united American Methodism, was published in 1935. It is especially rich, as one might expect, in hymns that deal with social religion, brotherhood, world peace and service. The revised *Hymnal* of the Protestant Episcopal Church has now been completed, and the publication is expected during the summer of 1943. All of these great denominational hymnals are now ecumenical in character. They represent the whole Christendom, not sectarian parts of it. They borrow freely and cooperatively from one another, and the interdenominational hymnals set them side by side in bowls and skim the cream from them all.

Although the Hymn Society of America is only twenty years old, it is, as its name indicates, the inheritor of three centuries of American hymnody, and in the person of its former president, Dr. Henry Wilder Foote, it attended the Harvard Tercentenary celebration and gave a good account of its inheritance. Dr. Foote's account of the colonial period of psalmody in this country, and of the long and hard transition from psalmody to hymnody, was of especial interest historically, and has its bearing upon hymn-writing today. Someone has remarked that we shall either lose the war in which we are engaged or emerge from it "lean, tough, hard-bitten psalm-singers," in other words, revert to type under strain.

The virtues which enabled our American forebears to win the numerous wars in which they were engaged—their independence of character, their indomitable resolution, and their confident belief that while they continued to place their reliance in Him the Lord of hosts would be with them—all were nourished on the Psalter, and more specifically, on English metrical versions of the psalms. For America was Puritan in those days, as it still is in the marrow of its bones, and to the Puritans, as Rowland E. Prothero has said, the Psalter was the book of books. "Soldiers sang (metrical versions of the Psalms) on the march, by the campfire, on parade, in the storm of battle. The ploughman carolled them over his furrow; the carter hummed them by the side of his wagon." It was left to the great Isaac Watts to make possible both in England and America the transition from psalmody to hymnody. Ralph Waldo Emerson, who was far from being in theological agreement with him, recognized the greatness of this accomplishment. "Dr. Watts," he said, "though his mind was imprisoned in a dark and barbarous system of religious faith, did yet, by the fervor of his piety and the freedom of his thought, wonderfully raise the downtrodden muse of the English churches."

Emerson would have been glad to raise the downtrodden muse of the American churches, but had not this particular ability. He himself wrote only one hymn, "We love the venerable house," which he composed for the ordination of his successor in the historic Second Church in Boston, Chandler Robbins. It was not a great hymn. But he realized the importance of hymns, and in a sermon which he preached, October 2, 1831, he said, "I wish to bring to your attention the subject of hymn books. I am anxious that we should sing hymns which we can feel, and which can do the office of sacred poetry upon our minds—can arouse, thrill, cheer, soothe, solemnize or melt us. I desire that we should not sing hymns to God that we should be ashamed to compose in praise of a man, flat, prosaic, unaffecting productions such as too many have been and are. . . The best poets should have written hymns for those who speak the English tongue, . . instead of permitting the unskilful versifiers who with whatever good intentions first turned the psalms of David into English metre."

Lord Tennyson is said to have remarked that he could not write hymns because they had to be both religious and commonplace and he found it difficult to be the latter. Other poets fortunately were not of this opinion, and a galaxy of American poets who were Emerson's contemporaries enriched both American hymnody and American letters. Whittier appears to have done so almost by accident. Most of his hymns were not written as such, but are centos taken by editors from his longer poems. Attention has been called to the fact that the most beautiful and popular of them all, "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind," comes from "The Brewing of Soma," Soma being an intoxicating drink supposed to promote religious exhilaration, and that it was written "after a particularly noisy and distasteful revival in Whittier's neighborhood." This anti-revival hymn is likely to outlast all the revival hymns of the period.

Another hymn by a distinguished American poet, of which the *Encyclopedia Brittanica* says that "it is difficult to praise too highly," is "Lord

of all being, throned afar," by Oliver Wendell Holmes. A third American hymn writer who deserves rank in the society of Whittier and Holmes is Samuel Longfellow, younger brother of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. When the Hymns Committee of the Church of St. Martin-in-the-fields, London, edited their notable selection of the best hymns in the English language, they included in their small collection no less than four of the hymns of Samuel Longfellow. It has been said of his hymn, "I look to thee in every need," that the literature of devotion contains few songs of trust which surpass it. Samuel Longfellow and Samuel Johnson cooperated in editing and publishing a hymn book which because of the given names of the editors came to be jocularly known as the "Sam Book." The "Sam Book" deserves to be remembered as having given to the world two of Samuel Johnson's greatest hymns, "City of God, how broad and far," and his "Life of ages, richly poured."

Life of ages, richly poured,
    Love of God, unspent and free,
Flowing in the prophet's word
    And the people's liberty.

Never was to chosen race
    That unstinted tide confined;
Thine is every time and place,
    Fountain sweet of heart and mind!

While the new era in American hymnody came from Unitarians centered about Boston, orthodox Congregationalists centered about Yale College made their own distinctive contribution. The great hymn of the Church, "I love thy kingdom, Lord," was written not by a self-designated "churchman," but by Timothy Dwight, president of Yale College from 1795 to 1817. Leonard Bacon was a Yale graduate, and his commemoration hymn, "O God, beneath thy guiding hand," was written in 1833 for the two-hundredth anniversary of the founding of Connecticut. Ray Palmer was a Yale graduate and a Congregationalist, and wrote thirty-eight hymns of high literary quality, of which "My faith looks up to thee," and "Jesus, thou joy of loving hearts," are universally appreciated. About forty years ago another Congregationalist, William DeWitt Hyde, president of Bowdoin College, Maine, wrote a hymn which for maturity of thought marks a definite era in hymnody, a break with the subjectivism which led a group of psychologists to characterize one thousand out of four thousand American hymns as "infantile." President Hyde's hymn is not open to the charge.

Creation's Lord, we give thee thanks
  That this thy world is incomplete;
That battle calls our marshaled ranks;
  That work awaits our hands and feet;

That thou hast not yet finished man;
  That we are in the making still,
As friends who share the Maker's plan,
  As sons who know the Father's will.

And coming to our own times, another Congregationalist, Henry Hallam Tweedy, Emeritus Professor of Practical Theology in the Yale Divinity School, won a hymn contest conducted under the auspices of the Hymn Society with another noble hymn of religious maturity in thought and expression, "Eternal God, whose power upholds."

American hymnody began for Congregationalism with the name of Timothy Dwight. For Episcopalianism it begins with the name of William Augustus Muhlenberg. With his schools, his hospital, his free church, above all with the broad catholicity which began for Episcopalians the march toward Christian unity, he stands out as an unequalled leader, and adds to these the renown of having been a pioneer in Episcopalian hymnody. With Episcopalians, as with members of other denominations, hymnody replaced psalmody gradually, over a period of time covering many decades. The bishops helped to make it respectable. Bishop George Washington Doane's "Softly now the light of day" and his "Fling out the banner" were good hymns. Bishop William Croswell Doane of Albany wrote "Ancient of days" for the bi-centenary of the city of Albany. Phillips Brooks wrote one of the loveliest of Christmas hymns, "O little town of Bethlehem," for his Sunday school at Holy Trinity Church, Philadelphia. And lately Walter Russell Bowie, though he declined election to the episcopate, has enriched American hymnody with his advent hymn, "Lord Christ, when first thou cam'st to men," and his social service hymn, "O holy city, seen of John."

But today American hymnody is quite genuinely ecumenical, and hymns find their way into general use quite irrespective of their denominational origins. We are all singing William Pierson Merrill's "Rise up, O men of God," even though Episcopalians have felt constrained to leave out the third verse, and on Thanksgiving Day we all ought to be singing Dr. Merrill's great Thanksgiving Day hymn, one of the greatest national hymns in the English language,

Not alone for mighty empire,
    Stretching far o'er land and sea,
Not alone for bounteous harvests,
    Lift we up our hearts to thee:
Standing in the living present,
    Memory and hope between,
Lord, we would with deep thanksgiving
    Praise thee most for things unseen.

So with a dozen other hymns of the new age of religious thought and the new world of religious feeling; for example, Harry Emerson Fosdick's "God of grace and God of glory" and Henry Van Dyke's "Joyful, joyful we adore thee," which is a poetical counterpart of the ending of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Frederich Nietzsche once remarked, "I should listen more patiently to these Christians' talk of a Redeemer if they acted more like a redeemed people and showed joy about it." Van Dyke's hymn does. Frank Mason North's great social hymn, "Where cross the crowded ways of life," was written in the beginning of the twentieth century, but it has

already won its way to world-wide acceptance. As for translations, some of the best of all time have been made quite recently, and where Robert Bridges, Poet Laureate of England, led the way with his *Yattenden Hymnal*, many have followed. American translators, Landsberg, Mann and Gannett, have made available for us the Yigdal, the Jewish Doxology, which as a hymn of lofty, unself-conscious, utterly devoted praise stands in the tradition of the Hebrew Psalter.

Praise to the living God!
All praised be his name,
Who was, and is, and is to be,
For aye the same!
The One Eternal God
Ere aught that now appears:
The first, the last, beyond all thought
His timeless years!

We are today in a creative period of American and Canadian hymnody, second only in importance to that of the flowering of New England. One likes to look forward to its future development, and to hope that as after the Thirty Years' War, and after the Napoleonic wars, great popular revivals of religion were borne upward on wings of song, so it will be with us after the victory of the United Nations will have brought peace to the world, and new beginnings.

Oh wind,
If winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

2. THE PLACE OF HYMNS IN PUBLIC WORSHIP

(Summary)

HOWARD CHANDLER ROBBINS, D.D.

Methodist Building, Monday Morning

Religion proceeds upon the assumption that God is real and that communion with him is possible. This communion is a two-way communication. From God manward it is grace, communicated through the word of God, the sacraments and other means of grace. From man Godward it is worship, communicated through prayer, praise and self-commitment.

It follows that worship, including hymnody, is to be regarded as a sacrifice offered to God, a service rendered to him, and that it must be true, good and as beautiful as we can make it. "God is the audience," said Kirkegaard. Worship should be theocentric, centered in God and not in self, objective rather than subjective.

Judged by this criterion, hymns are often the weakest part of divine services. A study of radio broadcasts discloses that throughout the country the level of preaching is fairly good, the level of pastoral prayer fair to middling, but the level of hymnody low because overweighted with subjectivism and sentimentality. A group of psychologists who examined

4000 popular hymns pronounced 1000 of them infantile from the psychological viewpoint. They represented an attempt to escape from the responsibilities of life rather than to gain strength to meet them. Religion is an escape, not *from* reality, but *into* eternal reality, and our greatest hymns, such as "O God, our help in ages past," indicate this.

This fact has been recognized by leading denominations, such as Episcopalians, Methodists, Presbyterians, in recent revisions of their respective hymnals. Hymns that are weak, unreal, sentimental, self-centered, are being quietly dropped: noble and beautiful hymns are replacing them, and the denominations are borrowing so much from one another that hymnody is becoming ecumenical, as it should be. In the hymnals of the denominations mentioned, and in others also, there is an increasing percentage of hymns that meet the requirement of St. Augustine that a hymn should be praise to God in song.

But it has been well said that "a hymn has a teaching office, and an office of mutual encouragement, as well as an office of prayer and praise." This definition recognizes the legitimacy of hymns of social service, in which Methodism has led the way, and in hymns concerned with international peace and national loyalty, of which Merrill's "Not alone for mighty empire" is an outstanding example. The substitution of hymns *for* children, instead of *about* them, is also an office of mutual encouragement. Lesbia Scott's "I sing a song of the saints of God," Percy Dearmer's "Remember all the people," and Jan Struther's "We thank you, Lord of Heaven" are significant of this trend.

How can we promote the use of better hymns?

1. By relating hymns to the great theocentric rhythms of the Christian Year: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Whitsuntide, etc., instead of selecting them hap-hazardly.

2. By choosing hymns common to the great new hymnals of the Churches, mimeographing them if necessary, carefully selecting the proper tunes for them, and using them often.

3. By teaching them in theological seminaries, and to choirs in choir practice; by teaching them to congregations in hymn singing periods a half hour before service, or in the pastor's home; by inviting the congregation occasionally to attend choir practice.

4. By telling the history of hymns and their writers. Percy Dearmer's *Songs of Praise Discussed* and James Moffatt's *Handbook to the Church Hymnary* will be found useful in this connection.

In these and other ways we may make our congregations familiar with the best hymns available, and familiarity with them will lead to preference of them over those that are unworthy, however popular for the time being. It will be a case of "the expulsive power of a new affection."

3. COOPERATION IN PLANNING FOR HYMNS IN WORSHIP

THE REV. PHILIP S. WATTERS

Methodist Building, Monday Morning

A friend who has been a physician in China tells of a Chinese doctor's prescription which contained these words: "Take a root . . . . take another root." Just which root was to be taken the prescription did not specify. We may only hope that by some kindly providence each root chosen was of the right sort. Too many people who have services to lead follow that doctor's principle. "Someone choose a hymn." It is time we stopped choosing *a* hymn and made it our rule to choose *the* hymn best suited to the special place in the particular service in which it is to be used.

The business of choosing the hymns goes back farther than we realize. For the first requirement is that the desired hymns be *available.* This means that the best hymnal possible shall be used. Fortunately many very excellent books are now to be had, and the hymnals of the great denominations have become very acceptable indeed. But, unfortunately, inferior books are still being produced and bought, and unworthy hymns are still being chosen.

This brings us to the second consideration, that the truly great hymns must come to be *preferred* in our churches, so that the best hymnals will be selected and the best hymns used. We have been short-sighted at this point. We have felt great satisfaction in seeing a few leaders educated in hymnic appreciation and taste, and have not realized clearly enough the necessity of educating the larger group of people. It is not enough that the best hymns be available. People must also understand them and want them. A strong-willed and strong-minded woman of my acquaintance was ranting one day about the refusal of youth to do what she felt they ought to do. She set her considerable jaw and declared with deep and unshakable conviction, "they ought to be made to do it and to do it willingly!" We may smile at her, but she had a good idea. And in this matter of hymns it is a question of making people choose the great hymns willingly.

This means that someone—many someones—must assume responsibility for teaching the people, beginning with the children, about hymns. Such simple considerations as that worship should be God-centered and that hymns should be sung to his glory need to be presented and presented again and emphasized. If we should sometimes go back to the old custom of reading hymns aloud in informal services, we could call attention to the excellence of poetry and to intellectual and spiritual values, thus teaching people what to look for in hymns. If those who choose banal, repetitious, sentimental jingles had to read them aloud, they might possibly discover what crimes they have been committing. And if the types of hymns and their functions in the various parts of the service and their influence upon the thinking and acting of children and older people were more generally understood, there would be a greater willingness to cooperate in the choosing and singing of the best.

When we come to the actual choices for a particular church service, those most concerned are the minister and the organist. These two should work together very closely. Unfortunately the average organist in the smaller church knows little about hymns, and the average minister in the same situation knows little about music. Too often neither is very well informed even in his own field, and we have heard of cases in which they were not capable of learning anything from each other. "Brethren, these things should not be." Fortunately there is no priority on learning. Three or four books carefully studied by each can make a world of difference; and the same books carefully studied by both can create a bond of common understanding. If they are still unable to work together in the spirit of Christ for the worship of Almighty God, either the minister or the organist or both should be made to depart and to do it willingly for the common good. But leaders, who are sincerely self-forgetful and Christian, should be able to complement each other; and in a very great many churches the finest of team work is found.

Both the minister and the organist should take part in choosing both the hymns and the anthems, so the musical elements in the service may supplement but not duplicate each other, and the service may be a unit, with a progressive development of thought and emotion directed toward the desired goal. In churches where this is the habitual procedure and where the long range education of the people is not neglected, the hymns become an increasingly important and interesting and inspiring influence in the services. Following one person's peculiar taste results in repetitious choices or a distorted emphasis. And the services themselves develop to the greater glory of God.

4. WHAT IS A GOOD HYMN?

(Summary)

JOHN HAYNES HOLMES, D.D.

Marble Collegiate Church, Monday Afternoon

Nothing could be more appropriate for this occasion that the subject assigned to me. People are constantly asking the question, What is a good hymn? or else they challenge us to give it thought when they submit their own work for general acceptance. Before considering the elements of quality and excellence in a hymn we need to ask the broader question, What is a hymn?

Among the many definitions of a hymn I like that of Francis Greenwood Peabody, of the Harvard Divinity School, who gave us the following: "A hymn is a prayer to God expressed in song." A hymn opens the door of the soul upward and outward toward the conception of the Divine, and lifts the soul beyond itself, as prayer always does.

In its primary conception a hymn as a prayer is addressed to God, and the apparent exceptions to this objective are felt to be prayers implicitly,

even though not by direct statement. Some of these exceptions may be outlined.

First, there are the didactic hymns, which are instructional and lay down ethical propositions. In this type we class "How happy is he, born or taught" by Henry Wotton, or "God moves in a mysterious way" by Cowper.

Next, we notice the hortatory hymns, of which class "Onward, Christian soldiers" and "Rise up, O men of God" are excellent examples.

Lastly, we must include the propositional hymns, which are prophetic in tone. Among such hymns are "A mighty fortress is our God" and "These things shall be; a loftier race" by John Addington Symonds.

We can now proceed to suggest some qualities that characterize a good hymn. A hymn should be simple, with a single idea, intellectually. It must contain not the slightest suggestion of complexity, in either thought or expression. There must be no unusual words, no fanciful figures of speech, no elaboration of diction or of phrase. Those very devices of eloquence and beauty, which the poet commands as the composer commands the instruments in his orchestra, are here quite out of place. Simplicity is the word—simplicity which is the handmaid of clarity. A good hymn must be as clear on the first reading as the second, and as obvious in its essence to the child as to the adult mind. No better example of this quality can be found than the classic, "Nearer, my God, to thee."

Second, a hymn must be characterized by feeling rather than by thought. It must appeal primarily to the heart and not the mind. Of course, it must have a central idea, or theme. But this theme must not be developed by an intellectual process so much as quickened by a spiritual emotion. It must be stated, not argued or amplified, and then it should be suffused with the glow and heat of exalted sentiment. A good hymn must stir the soul: it must comfort, challenge and inspire.

Last, a hymn must draw its idea, or theme, from the familiar, even the commonplace, events of life. Its range may extend from the sublime regions of the heavens to the intimate recesses of the heart. It may chant the vast concepts of time and eternity, as in Isaac Watts's "O God, our help in ages past," or catalogue the simple sentiments of personal dedication, as in Frances Havergal's "Take my life and let it be," which we are told is Gandhi's favorite Christian hymn. It may deal with the great traditions of faith and love, or mark transitions to new stages of spiritual apprehension, as in the social hymnology of our day. But always it must dwell where the heart of man is more or less at home. For a hymn always remains a prayer: it is the soul lifting itself from its daily lot to communion with the Most High. Therefore it must begin with what it knows, and only then reach out to what it dares to dream.

May I end with a personal reminiscence. Many years ago I wrote a modest Sunday school hymn, "O Father, thou who givest all," so slight in substance that I was almost ashamed of it. But as years went by, it became widely accepted, being included in general hymnals. On the other hand,

some more pretentious lyrics produced in later years failed to make their way so readily into the hearts of worshippers, and they are not nearly so well known today.

It is high time that hymnology were recognized and reverenced for itself alone, thus being rescued at last from its lowly station as a kind of poor poetry, and lifted to its proper place as the song of the soul in tune with God.

Note by editor: Dr. Holmes has kindly allowed the hymn mentioned above to be printed with this brief summary of his paper. We also acknowledge the courtesy of the Christian Century, from which some paragraphs are quoted above. The hymn is as follows:

O Father, thou who givest all
The bounty of thy perfect love,
We thank thee that upon us fall
Such tender blessings from above.

We thank thee for the grace of home,
For mother's love and father's care,
For friends and teachers—all who come
Our joys and hopes and fears to share,

For eyes to see and ears to hear,
For hands to serve and arms to lift,
For shoulders broad and strong to bear,
For feet to run on errands swift,

For faith to conquer doubt and fear,
For love to answer every call,
For strength to do, and will to dare,
We thank thee, O thou Lord of all.

5. THE ORGANIST'S PLACE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF HYMNODY

SETH BINGHAM, F. A. G. O.

Marble Collegiate Church, Monday Afternoon

There is no intention here of presenting an historical survey of hymnody: the subject is too vast. The organist's chief role is an artistic one; whereas the evolution of hymnody, stemming from antiquity, has been largely emotional and spiritual. It is a safe guess that less than half of the hymn-tunes in current use were composed by organists. But it is quite pertinent to ask: in what ways can the organist aid in the development of good hymnody? And I should like to enumerate several.

1. *By being a good organist.* Some months ago, the quarterly magazine, "Religion In Life," asked me for an article on "The Organist's Function in Worship." The article, which appeared in the 1942 summer issue, con-

tained a paragraph, which I venture to repeat here, on the qualifications of the ideal organist:

> The organist's approach to his art should be one of consecration; he must be in love with his task. Whatever policy toward its organist the church may pursue, be it strictly "business," truly Christian or a mixture of the two, the organist must find his highest reward in the satisfaction of devoted service rendered. Any organist worth his salt will gladly do for his church a thousand and one things he is not paid to do. The organist should be a "man of God" in the Christian sense; one can scarcely conceive the irreligious or unbelieving type of artist exercising his musical ministry with any permanent degree of happiness or success. This is not to say that an organist must believe in total immersion in order effectively to preside over the musical destinies of a Baptist flock. His study of the Bible, hymnody and church ritual should be thorough and constant. Technically and aesthetically the organist's education must necessarily entail years of arduous preparation, which he should willingly undertake. He ought to be a person of broad cultural outlook and warm humanity with a liking for his fellow men; pictures and architecture should attract him; whenever possible he should travel. He ought to be, and frequently is, a leader of musical culture in his community. The exercise of good taste should not turn him into an aesthetic snob, nor on the other hand should he lower his standards to curry favor with those who show themselves in their own tastes, any more than the preacher should stoop to cheap methods to gain the interest of his hearers.

2. *By first-rate hymn-playing.* A second quotation from the above-mentioned article discusses this very important essential:

> In the singing of hymns the congregation finds its most vital and tangible outlet for religious emotion. Our greatest hymns combine verses of grand poetic imagery with music which is in every way worthy of the text. Nothing else save prayer succeeds in voicing our innermost aspirations so simply and directly. It would therefore seem self-evident that this means of congregational participation should assume paramount importance for the organist whose duty it is to play the hymns. But it must be admitted that many are still deficient in this branch of their art. Hymns should be practiced as thoroughly and conscientiously as solo selections or anthem accompaniments. The organist should know words and music practically by heart. He must decide how to introduce the hymn, when to signal the choir to rise, whether the hymn should be sung wholly or partially in unison, whether to transpose it, the suitable tempo and how to maintain it, whether to "paint the lily" in a sentimental hymn or overdramatize a dramatic one, how to treat the Amen. These and many other questions will occur to the alert organist intent on realizing the fullest possibilities of a hymn. Nothing quite equals the thrill of satisfaction for the organist who knows how to lead and inspire his congregation in the singing of a fine hymn.

3. *By aiding in the choice of hymns.* Ordinarily the hymns should be chosen by the minister with as much or little collaboration from the organist as may be needed, depending mainly on the minister's own musical training or lack of it. It would be unwise to leave the entire selection of hymns to the organist, for there are too many questions involved which only the minister can answer.

The hymn will reinforce the sermon-topic, the scripture lesson, the collects or epistle of the day; it will give utterance to our various feelings of praise, adoration, repentance, petition, gratitude; it will celebrate the sacraments or some special feast or season. All this must be borne in mind in planning the hymns. Other influencing factors are the familiarity,

newness or difficulty of hymns, their vocal range, their literary or musical worth; the size and attitude of the congregation, its ability to sing in parts or in unison, and the use of hymnals with or without music should also be taken into account.

The choice of processional and recessional can usually be safely left with the organist. The ordinary hymnal carries about 150 such hymns, but usually less than half of those available are so employed. Of the following processionals and recessionals, how many have a place in your service lists?

First Line	*Tune*
All beautiful the march of days	Forest Green (unison *ad lib*)
All praise to thee	Tallis' Canon (evening recessional)
And is the time approaching	Pearsall
Angel voices ever singing	Angel Voices (6/8 is grateful relief from 4/4)
As the sun doth daily rise	Innocents (morning processional)
Ask ye what great thing I know	Hendon
Awake, my soul	Christmas (general use)
Cross of Jesus, cross of sorrow	Cross of Jesus (Lent)
Day is dying in the west	Evening Praise
Father, we praise thee	Christe Sanctorum (morning processional—unison)
Fight the good fight	Courage
From all that dwell	Vigili et Sancti
From ocean unto ocean	Lancashire
God my King, thy might confessing	Stuttgart
God of compassion	O Quanta Qualia
God of the prophets	Toulon
God rest you, merry	Traditional
God that madest earth and heaven	Ar Hyd Y Nos (evening recessional)
God the Omnipotent	Russian Hymn
Good Christian men	In Dulci Jubilo
Guide me, O thou great Jehovah	Cwm Rhondda
Hail the day	Ascension
Hark, what a sound	Welwyn (unison)
He who would valiant be	Monks Gate
Heralds of Christ	National Hymn
I look to thee	O Jesu
I love to tell the story	I Love to Tell the Story
In heavenly love	Nyland (unison *ad lib*)
Joyful, joyful	Hymn to Joy
Judge eternal	Rhuddlan
Lead on, O King	Pearsall
Let all mortal flesh	Picardy
Let folly praise that fancy loves (Christmas)	Noel
Let us with a gladsome mind	Monkland (first bar unison)
Life of ages	Redhead No. 45
Lift up your heads (Advent)	Truro
Lord God of hosts	Welwyn (unison)
Lord of life and King of glory(Mother's Day)	Sicilian Mariners
Majestic sweetness	Grafenberg (unison *ad lib*)
March on	Arthur's Seat

First Line	*Tune*
O brother man	Welwyn
O come and mourn	St. Cross (Holy Week)
O come, O come, Emmanuel	Veni Emmanuel
O everlasting light	Swabia
O God of earth	Llangloffan (unison)
O Holy City	Morwellham
O Lord of life	Pro Patria
O sing a song	Kingsfold (Christmas, unison)
O Son of Man	Charterhouse
O 'twas a joyful sound	Mt. Sion
O what their joy	O Quanta Qualia
Once to every man	Ton-y-Botel
One holy church	St. James
Praise, O praise	Monkland
Rejoice, the Lord is King	Darwall
Rise crowned with light	Russian Hymn
Rise, my soul	Amsterdam
Rise up, O men of God	Festal Song
Take my life	Vienna
The chariots of the Lord	Praetorious
The day of resurrection	Rotterdam
The God of Abraham	Leoni
The golden gates	Praetorious
The King of Glory standeth	Gosterwood
The Lord will come	York
The spacious firmament	Creation
Thou, Holy Father	Vigili et Sancti
Through the night	St. Asaph
We are living, we are dwelling	Blaenhafren
We plow the fields	Wir Pflugen
Who trusts in God	Bishopgarth
With songs and honors	Ellacombe

The above list purposely avoids the beaten track, but all of these hymns may be found either in *The Hymnal* (Presbyterian) or in *Hymns of the Kingdom* (A. S. Barnes).

4. *By propaganda for the best of hymnody.* When participating in worship in a strange church, one immediately becomes aware of the congregation's attitude toward hymn-singing. Some congregations sing their hymns heartily with fervor and conviction. The organist counts it a great blessing to serve such a parish. Others seem apathetic, timid or indifferent. Whose the fault? Not necessarily the congregation's. Poor hymn-leadership by the organist is sometimes to blame. Too slow or too rapid tempos, inappropriate registration, slovenly rhythm or lackadaisical singing by the choir may be contributing causes. These are faults which can and should be remedied.

Organists frequently complain of the lack of musical taste among worshippers, and the complaint is often justified, particularly in the case of the so-called non-liturgical churches. I suppose the organist's impatience with this lack of discrimination parallels that of the pastor with those of his parishioners who rarely open their Bibles. It has been my own experience that many church-goers who enjoy every means for hearing

and knowing the best in music exhibit atrocious taste in their likes and dislikes of hymns. They incline toward the cheap and sentimental, and they sometimes exert pressure to have their wishes carried out in the selection of hymns and anthems, to the great detriment of the church's music. But the organist must accept these problems with good grace: they are not insoluble. Enthusiastic, quietly persistent propaganda for the better hymns, rather than carping criticism of the poor ones, will in the long run produce good results.

5. *By expanding the hymn-repertoire.* Statistics have been cited to show that the average hymn-repertoire of a church does not exceed 200 tunes. This means either that most of our hymnals carry anywhere from 200 to 600 dead weight of useless hymns, or that something positive should be done to acquaint congregations with many splendid hymns hitherto unknown to them.

At the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York a clearly defined procedure is followed in introducing new hymns. One new hymn during a service is compensated by two very familiar ones. Usually the pastor calls attention to the new hymn, which is played through once or twice on the organ; then a verse is sung by the choir and repeated by the congregation. Two or three weeks later the hymn is again listed, this time without comment. The church's hymn-repertoire has been steadily increased by this means, some of the new hymns becoming real favorites with the congregation.

The congregational rehearsal is employed in some churches; it has fine possibilities where there is close cooperation between the parson, the organist and the four-and-twenty elders. Such a rehearsal may precede or succeed a service, or may take the form of a week-night hymn-sing. The choir may or may not assist. Last year it was my privilege to conduct a series of "hymn-sings" preceding the vesper services at the Central Presbyterian Church, New York. While no special emphasis was placed on learning new hymns, the enthusiasm and growing attendance at these sings would seem to indicate a genuine eagerness to share this kind of communal worship.

Inspirational talks on the origin and history of certain hymns, such as those so beautifully and persuasively given by Mr. Carl F. Price, are a great stimulus, particularly where it is possible for the audience to do some singing and get the "feel" of the tunes under discussion. To be sure not every church possesses a Mr. Price, but the minister and organist can get together and work out an interesting, illustrated talk, devoted to a few well-selected hymns.

6. *As a teacher.* More than once, while assisting as a judge at try-outs of candidates for a church position, I have heard some brilliant young executant give a dazzling performance of a difficult organ work for the assembled committee, only to fail dismally when asked to play the accompaniment of a simple hymn. The organist, who is conversant with the needs of hymnody and alive to its significance in public worship, will

surely pass on to his pupils all possible technical knowledge which can make for intelligent hymn-leadership. This should be a regular part of every young organist's instruction.

7. *As a composer or improvisor.* If the organist is gifted with creative talent, he may write short preludes, offertoires, postludes or meditations based on church hymns in common use. It is true that we have the incomparable Bach chorale preludes, which are constantly played for their intrinsic beauty, but with a few exceptions the hymns on which they were based are not sung in our churches today and would have little meaning for our age and generation. The writer has tried his hand at this form of composition with a set of twelve hymn-preludes recently published by H. W. Gray Company, purposely based on very familiar tunes of which a list is here given:

Ajalon ("Gracious Spirit, dwell with me")
Festal Song ("Rise up, O men of God")
Morwellham ("O Holy City, seen of John")
Martyn ("Jesus, Lover of my soul")
Toplady ("Rock of ages")
Truro ("These things shall be" or "Lift up your heads")
Bethany ("Nearer, my God, to thee")
Bread of Life ("Break thou the bread of life")
Langran ("O thou great Friend" or "Lead us, O Father")
Need ("I need thee every hour")
Olivet ("My faith looks up to thee")

One of these may be featured when the corresponding hymn is on the service list; it may become an effective means of concentrating the worshipper's attention on the hymn in question, and so add to the unity of the worship-service. A skillful extemporization may achieve the same purpose. Extemporization, however, is more than a gift: it is really a special technique, and few of our organists have mastered it. One must still go to France to hear the art of improvisation at its greatest. There is no mystery in this: the young French organist receives systematic training in improvisation, with daily practice, over a period of several years. Some progress, however, is being made in the United States through the efforts of the American Guild of Organists, and through individual teachers.

8. *As an editor.* Most of us will agree that there is an over-supply of hymnals on the market, and that the perfect hymnal does not exist. Perhaps this is impossible to achieve. Too many conflicting elements must be reconciled in its compilation. There are some good ones, however, and the general level of excellence is much higher than a generation ago.

Organists who act in an editorial capacity are usually too occupied elsewhere to spend the immense amount of time required for such a task. And their musicianship is not always of the highest. Even our best hymn-collections contain tunes of dubious value, harmonizations and changes which reflect the editor's personal bias rather than sound tradition. As I implied, the endless research, checking of sources and collating of versions find the really qualified church musician too busy to give this editorial

job the requisite attention, unless he could be temporarily relieved of some of his routine duties and suitably compensated. But there is no question of the importance of first-class musical editing in the publication of a new hymnal.

To sum up briefly: The organist as an artist can share in the development of hymnody by living up to the obligations of a good organist, by keen and vital hymn-leadership, by aiding his minister in the choice of hymns, by steady propaganda for the best in hymnody and by discreetly featuring new hymns as part of his musical ministry. As a teacher, he can spread the good gospel among his students, through composition or improvisation he may greatly enrich the meaning of hymn-worship, and, as an editor, he may help to raise the standards of hymnody. And who knows? It may some day be his exceptional good fortune to compose fitting music for a great hymn.

6. MODERN TRENDS IN HYMNS FOR YOUTH

MISS MARGUERITE HAZZARD

Marble Collegiate Church, Monday Afternoon

Perhaps the two greatest contributions of Christ's ministry are his *fight for character* against sin and his example of brotherhood. Herein lies the challenge to youth. The problem of what to do with one's life; the desire for economic independence and social contacts; the struggle for physical health and mental efficiency; the anticipation of family relationships; the interest in civic and community responsibilities; the aspiration for right personal relationships toward God, Christ and the Church; the growing recognition of world brotherhood—these are the problems which youth must solve for himself and for his generation. Youth needs a personal God as a guide, as a helper, and as a friend, but he needs assistance to find God in his own daily personal life. Youth responds with ardent self-sacrifice to the service of a great cause, but needs direction to make potential capacity actual.

"Watch what main currents draw the years." To appreciate the trends in the hymns for youth today, we must look for a moment at yesterday. Following the Civil War, we find a wave of emotional revival sweeping the country. Volume after volume of evangelistic songs and gospel hymns, to rattling syncopated tunes, poured from the publishing houses. The accent was on personal religion—a getting right with God and an undirected, passive concern for others. While this period sees the rise of the great philanthropies in the Evangelical Churches, a noble expression of concern for others and a way of service, it is also the beginning of a self-centered religious experience, expressed in countless hymns of a variety of values. For want of trained, aware leadership, these hymns became popular. Young people sang with enthusiasm the selfish hymns of yesterday.

Haste, haste, haste, in the business of the King,
While to do his bidding, golden hours are on the wing;
Step, step, step, in his footprints, day by day,
Spreading joy around you, making sunshine by the way.

Refrain:
Lift your voice with gladness, and loud his praises sing,
Haste, haste, haste, in the business of the King;
Till the gates shall open, and the harps of glory ring,
Haste, haste, haste, in the business of the King.

E. E. Hewitt, 1906

And what of those great songs of the Church, which Augustine Smith has called "heritage hymns"—yes, some of them were in the books, but they were not used, to any extent, by the young people. There are a number of reasons for this untrained leadership: lack of appreciation of both the music and the words; the inexpert playing of the tunes, making them doleful, heavy dirges; a feeling that they belonged to Sunday, only; a vague realization that many of those in use did not speak to youth, nor meet his needs to express his self-centered spiritual life.

At about the turn of the century, which is the beginning of Today, we find that handful of educated, thinking leaders of youth offering a hymnal which contained the best of the popular songs of that day and many "heritage hymns" which youth might use to his advantage. This book, *The Endeavor Hymnal* (1901), was a noble start, and while we do not use many of its popular hymns today, it made a distinct contribution for many years. Steadily working, like leaven, these leaders sensed the need for a *social gospel*, for a directed *life of service*, as well as a fight for character, and here we see the beginning of the rise of Religious Education. Growing steadily in scope, influence and achievement, with some setbacks from over-emphasis on non-essentials, this specialized department of education, together with the improved musical and literary programs of the public schools, the increasing number of young people going to the colleges and graduate schools, the spread of wealth, leisure and culture throughout the country, gave direction to the enthusiastic response of youth to a life of service and brotherhood. Poets and musicians, both young and old, met the need for the expression of this dynamic interpretation of the Master's example. At last youth is supplied with hymns that express his worship, his idea of God, his consecration to Christ, and his response to the challenge of Christ's leadership, in work, effort, mission and brotherhood.

But it is not a simple story of steady growth; for with the rise of Religious Education and its intellectual appeal, came the rise of Fundamentalism and its adherence to a conservative doctrine and an emotional personal religion. Two distinct sets of hymnals have been offered to youth since the beginning of Today. Some of the worst hymns have been written in recent years, for example, "Get Jesus on the line on the Royal telephone" or "Man the lifeboats, help for Christ's sake them that sink." In 1912 Dr. Levermore, of Adelphi College in Brooklyn, offered *The Student's Hymnal;* in 1913 Dr. Winchester and Miss Conant brought out *Worship*

and Song; in 1915 Dr. Hartshorne's *Book of Worship* was published. These are the first of the new hymnals of Today.

Then came World War I. The popular song writers were ahead of us in expressing the new problem that we faced at the end of that. "How are you going to keep them down on the farm, after they've seen Broadway?" The great influx to the cities began together with the economic and social upheavals which followed the war. Youth had seen some of the world and knew from first-hand experience that it is a big place, filled with many people whose ways may be different from ours, but whose needs and aspirations are about the same. Then the travel adventure began. Not only the retired, older generation, but also youth caught what we sometimes call "Gangplank Fever," and set out to see the world. As the horizons widened, the spiritual life of youth broadened and deepened. The increased need for a vehicle to express his dedication to the Master's service was met by a wealth of new hymns and, at long last, the discovery of the "heritage hymns" was made. Listen for a moment to the hymnals of today:

Hymnal for American Youth	Smith	1919
Hymnal for Young People	Littlefield	1928
The American Student Hymnal	Smith	1928
New Hymnal for American Youth	Smith	1930

Denominational hymnals steadily improved in quality because the demand was constant and the non-denominational hymnals were in such favor.

Let us look for a moment at the contrasts in expression during Today.

1. Personal Religion:

I must tell Jesus all of my trials;
I cannot bear these burdens alone;
In my distress he kindly will help me;
He ever loves and cares for his own.

or

Dear Lord, who sought at dawn of day
The solitary woods to pray,
In quietness we come to ask
Thy guidance for the daily task.
Harry Webb Farrington, 1925

We bear the strain of earthly care,
But bear it not alone;
Beside us walks our brother, Christ,
And makes our task his own.
Ozora S. Davis, 1909

2. Reward:

I am thinking today of that beautiful land
I shall reach when the sun goeth down;
When thro' wonderful grace by my Saviour I stand,
Will there be any stars in my crown?

or

Lord God of Hosts, whose purpose never swerving,
Leads toward the day of Jesus Christ, thy Son,
Grant us to march among thy faithful legions,
Armed with thy courage, 'til the world is won.

Shepherd Knapp, 1907

I would be true, for there are those who trust me;
I would be pure, for there are those who care;
I would be strong, for there is much to suffer,
I would be brave, for there is much to dare.

Howard Arnold Walter, 1883-1918

Jesus, Thou Divine Companion	Henry Van Dyke, 1909
O Master Workman of the Race	Jay T. Stocking, 1912
Rise Up, O Men of God	Wm. Pierson Merrill, 1911
Forward Through the Ages	Frederick L. Hosmer, 1908

"Are ye able," said the Master,
"To be crucified with me?" — Earl Marlatt, 1924

3. Salvation:

Nor silver nor gold hath obtained my redemption,
No value on earth could have saved my poor soul;
The blood of the cross is my only foundation,
The death of my Saviour now maketh me whole.
I am redeemed, but not with silver,
I am bought, but not with gold,
Bought with a price, the blood of Jesus,
Precious price of love untold.

or

I know not how that Bethlehem's Babe
Could in the God-head be;
I only know the Manger Child
Has brought God's life to me.

I know not how that Calvary's cross
A world from sin could free;
I only know its matchless love
Has brought God's love to me.

I know not how that Joseph's tomb
Could solve death's mystery;
I only know a living Christ,
Our Immortality.

4. Value of Life:

Are your sorrows hard to bear?
Life is short!
Do you drag the chain of care?
Life is short!
Soon will come the glad release
Into joy and rest and peace;
Soon the weary thread be spun,
And the final labor done.
Keep your courage, hold the fort!
Life is short!

Be strong! We are not here to play, to dream, to drift;
We have hard work to do and loads to lift.
Shun not the struggle, face it, 'tis God's gift,
Be strong, be strong.

Maltbie D. Babcock, 1901

O Son of Man, thou madest known,
Through quiet work in shop and home,
The sacredness of common things,
The chance of life that each day brings.

Milton S. Littlefield, 1916

5. Service:

One more day's work for Jesus;
One less of life for me!
But heaven is nearer,
And Christ is dearer,
Than yesterday to me;
His love and light
Fill all my soul tonight.

or

I thank thee, Lord, for strength of arm
To win my bread,
And that, beyond my need, is meat
For friend unfed:
I thank thee much for bread to live,
I thank thee more for bread to give.

Robert Davis, 1908

In Christ there is no East or West.

John Oxenham, 1908

Where cross the crowded ways of life.

Frank Mason North, 1903

O Holy City seen of John.

W. Russell Bowie, 1909

We thank thee, Lord, thy paths of service lead
To blazoned heights and down the slopes of need;
They reach thy throne, encompass land and sea,
And he who journeys in them walks with thee.

Calvin W. Laufer, 1919

Watch what main currents draw the years! Today we have excellent hymnals, easily available; trained leaders from the schools of religious education and sacred music; denominational and interdenominational conferences for youth; youth movements of many kinds—we can mention just a few of the advances. Youth is no longer satisfied with that old song, "In the Garden," for he has caught a vision of the Christian way of life and its seeming paradox. Today he sings and understands:

Make me a captive, Lord,
And then I shall be free:
Force me to render up my sword,
And I shall conqueror be.

I sink in life's alarms
When by myself I stand;
Imprison me within thine arms,
And strong shall be my hand.

My heart is weak and poor
Until it master find;
It has no spring of action sure—
It varies with the wind.

It cannot freely move,
Till thou hast wrought its chain;
Enslave it with thy matchless love,
And deathless it shall reign.

George Matheson, 1842-1906

And what of tomorrow? Once more, the popular song-writer calls our attention to the future. Have you listened to that song, "When the lights go on again all over the world—When the boys come home again from all over the world?" What will that home-coming be like this time? Youth will have seen far more of the world than most of us. We must be ready. Only love will bind up the hurts of this stricken world, a love that goes beyond all that we have sensed or known. We must provide the singing weapons for the rebuilding of the world, for peace and true brotherhood. It is our responsibility to keep in tune with these main currents which will draw the years just ahead. Youth and we must be concerned with the politics of the future, with the labor of the future, with the price to be paid for the future.

If Martin Luther could sing in his Reformation in a hostile world, organized against him by ecclesiastical might, youth today will be able to sing in the reality of brotherhood through sacrificial love.

God of Grace, and God of Glory,
Grant us wisdom,
Grant us courage
For the living of this hour.

7. ANNIVERSARY ADDRESS

WILLIAM PIERSON MERRILL, D.D.

Town Hall Club, Monday Evening

I count it a high privilege to be asked to speak at this notable anniversary of the Hymn Society. It is an honor all the more appreciated because it is quite undeserved. I have not been a good member of the Society, so far as attendance at its meetings is concerned. But in reality I have been

and am truly interested in its work, and count it of real importance in the life and progress of true religion.

And religion is of vital importance just now. In the tremendous struggle in which our country is engaged, mighty efforts are being made to provide all the material needed, and to raise money to pay for it. It might seem to some that this is about all that counts—that we should be ready, not too late, and with adequate equipment. So far the results are promising.

But something more and deeper is also needed. Religion is of vital importance just now. It is heartening to note the evidences that our leaders and our people are realizing that fact more and more. We need a faith, a motive. One of the sources of power in the Germans is their confidence in their cause and their leader. Fanatical and hysterical as that faith seems to us, it is very real in its power. You may have heard the story of the German boy who asked his mother how he should pray. She said, "You must thank God and thank Hitler." "But, mother, what shall I say in my prayers when Hitler dies?" "Then, my son, you must just say, 'Thank God.' "

We shall fail unless we have a better faith in a better leader. Where they put their trust in Hitler we must put our trust in God. But that means, first and most of all, that we trust Him to give us courage and strength, to keep up our morale, as we call it. Not that we shall expect Him to work miracles for our salvation. A visitor back from Palestine told of a conversation he had with a rabbi. He asked if the rabbi thought we could win this war. He answered, "I see but two ways, a natural way and a miraculous way." "What are they?" "The natural way would be if God should intervene to give us power." "But then what would be the miracle?" "Oh," said the rabbi, "the miracle would be if we could win it by ourselves."

Hymns will have to play a large part in this contribution of religion to morale. Song always means much in maintaining the courage and enthusiasm of the people. It means something that at every concert "The Star-spangled Banner" is played and sung. And it is no discredit to that great old song to say that there are hymns that do more for the soul than even it can do, hymns that renew our faith in God and goodness, and call forth courage and hope in the fight for justice and goodwill. Who can ever forget that thrilling scene before Trondheim Cathedral, where a dense throng of Norwegian Christians, shut out by the Gestapo from holding their accustomed worship in the cathedral, took up the ancient rugged hymn, "A Mighty Fortress is our God," as if they would remind their oppressors of the true greatness of the German spirit and, still more, remind themselves of the glory and grace of God. In the words of Sidney Lanier, they were "Heartily laying ahold on the greatness of God." And now word comes that all through Norway the people are singing to the old American tune of "John Brown's Body" a song about their heroic leader, my good friend, Bishop Berggrav, how, though he is in prison, "his soul goes marching on." Hymns mean much at such times.

Before discussing the hymns themselves, I want to say a word about the importance of urging upon ministers and choir leaders proper care in the selection and use of hymns. In many Protestant churches we note the danger of the vice of slovenliness. It appears in many parts of the service, but I feel most of its presence in two parts of the worship, the reading of the Bible, and the use of hymns. All too often I note careless or indifferent reading of the Scriptures. On Palm Sunday a year and a half ago in one of our churches, the minister who was reading the lesson read that Jesus rode into Jerusalem "on an ass and a colt, the FOUL of an ass." Often the sacrament of the Lord's Supper suffers when the officiating minister in giving the cup says, "Drink ye *all* of it." That is not what Jesus said. He said, "Drink ye all *of* it." His concern was not that all the wine should be consumed, but that all the disciples should participate.

That detail is not our theme tonight. But it *is* appropriate that we who want to promote the right and helpful use of hymns should avail ourselves of every opportunity to impress on ministers and choir leaders the importance of paying real and constant attention to the matter of selection and use of the right hymns. That involves, of course, the selection of the right kind of hymn book. "Of making many hymnals there is no end, and much study of some of them is a weariness to the flesh."

Of course, even the best hymns and anthems can be misused. Out of very many cases I could mention, allow me to give a few. I once told Clarence Dickinson, my beloved friend and partner in the worship of the Brick Church during all my ministry, that only once had he let any incongruity slip into a service, and that was when he had the choir sing, right after the sermon, "Sleepers, Wake."

I once went to hear the silver-tongued orator, W. J. Bryan, speak at a church service. The presiding minister rose and announced, "Before Mr. Bryan speaks, Mr.—naming a well-known soloist—will sing." The soloist rose and sang a hymn the refrain of which was, "He knows it all." I did not notice any feeling on Mr. Bryan's part that it was inappropriate.

A friend of mine, a minister in Philadelphia, had spent several years as minister of a church there, and had remained a bachelor. Then he became engaged. He told me afterward that he searched with minute care through all the details of the service, lest there should be something that would suggest the happy event in which he knew all the people were deeply interested. To his horror he found himself giving out the hymn, "O happy day, that fixed my choice."

I know a minister who once preached on "Launch out into the deep," only to have all rise and sing, "Pull for the shore."

Only a few months ago I took part in a service of installation for a pastor. When the solemn service of installation, with its promises and prayers, was ended, the baritone rose and sang, "But who may abide the day of his coming."

Just a little forethought will obviate many such ludicrous misfits. Yet sometimes they will occur in spite of the utmost care. I recall just two such

cases in the Brick Church ministry, where the choir nearly broke down through irresistible laughter at the diabolical appropriateness of a hymn. In each case it was a beautiful hymn, and no one could have foreseen what happened. We were singing "Fairest Lord Jesus;" and as the last verse began, with its lovely picture, "Fair is the sunshine, fairer still the moonlight," one of the sopranos who had a clear and leading voice sang out, "Fair is the sunlight, fairer still the moonshine." It was in the Prohibition era, and the emergence of "still" and "moonshine" was too much for the gravity of the choir.

On another Sunday the service closed with the beautiful hymn, "In heavenly love abiding." As we sang the final stanza, I saw the choir almost convulsed with laughter. Later some of them explained. It seems that they had been planning for some time to go in a body to see that famous play, "The Green Pastures;" but somehow it had not been practicable. Suddenly they found themselves singing, "Green pastures are before me, which yet I have not seen." How could they help laughing?

Against such accidents no one can plan. But we can give thought and care always to keep the proper fitness and balance between message and music in our worship.

But enough of these minor matters. What about hymns, the part they play, and should play, in our worship? I remind you of some outstanding characteristics of this part of our common worship.

First, the hymns, as no other part of the worship, fuse four great, vital and beautiful elements. They are poetry, music, fellowship and religion. They unite the graces of poetry and music. Poetry plays a great part in the religious life. Some might not agree with me when I say that poets are our best practical theologians. But I say it. And I base it on long experience.

I look back, in my ministry of more than a half century, to the difficult days when we faced the new and mighty force of emerging modern science and philosophy. Our religion had to find new expression. I realize more and more deeply how much I owe to poets of that era, who, even more than the best theologians, helped me meet the emergency. Tennyson, Browning, Lowell, Arnold, Whittier and others helped me see the light. They brought the new thinking into the heart, and at the same time kept touch with what was good in the old.

But for religious uses poetry helps far more when joined to good music. Music is more like religion than anything else we know—intangible, indefinable, known only by being made a part of life, yet intensely real and wonderful and inspiring. Reread Abt Vogler if you would renew such a conviction.

When a great poem is set to a great tune you have religion in full glory.

It is not too much to say that in this age through which we are passing, the stimulating of interest in good hymns and tunes plays a valuable part in the cause of good poetry and good music. So much of modern poetry is careless, if not contemptuous, of form. Chesterton was quite right when

he said that to call such writing free verse was like lying down in a ditch and calling it "free architecture." So much of modern music also is characterized by a shameless disregard of harmony and melody and the standards evolved by the patient and inspired work of great masters and good students. Recently I listened to a Symphony Concert in which most of the music was just raucous discord. I recalled what John Galsworthy said was his idea of the prayer of the modern composer: "I can see him entering his study, bowing his head, and praying devoutly, 'O God, preserve me this day from falling into a tune.' "

But in the music of the church both hymn and tune must have something of the beauty of order and form. Imagination falters at the vision of a congregation trying to sing an ultra-modern poem set to ultra-modern music. So it is well for the cause of true poetry and real music that the hymns of the church should be cherished, the writing of new ones encouraged, and as well, or even better, the use of the best of the old ones.

Of course not all good hymns are fine poetry, nor are all good tunes fine music. Yet on the whole something of the grace of poetry and music shines in every good hymn rightly set.

Something more is added when hymns are used. For as in no other part of the worship, save in certain prayers and responses, the singing of hymns brings a strong and noble expression of the fellowship of the saints. Preaching is good—sometimes,—so are prayer, anthem and reading of the Bible, rightly done. But something is added when all rise and sing together, a special sense of the union of Christians in worship.

We cannot overstress the value of an act which thus brings together the richness of poetry, music, fellowship and religion.

Hymns have a peculiar value also in that they mark the progress of religion. It would be hard to find a better or more conclusive test of such progress than the advance in hymnology. Compare the hymnals that were in use fifty or even thirty years ago with those in use today. Oh, of course, some were good then, and some are poor now; but in the main the advance in excellence is striking.

Here, illustration is better than argument. Let me set before you, in imagination, two hymn books that illustrate this powerfully, both closely associated with a church I have served.

Some time ago a friend gave me a little book, entitled, *Brick Church Hymns*. It had been published in 1823. It bore the sub-title, "For use in social gatherings." I looked through it with deep personal interest, for my grandfather was singing in the choir of the Brick Church when that book was in use. Out of the 220 or so hymns in it I found not more than twenty that could be found in any modern hymnal; and of those less than a dozen are in use to any extent today, and have any popularity.

The rest were amazingly poor. An atmosphere of gloom hovered over them all. They insisted, in varied forms of expression, that we are all worms of the dust, grovelling sinners; and most of them set God up as a stern, implacable judge, a veritable Shylock. Let me quote from two of

them, which, while extreme, are really representative. One of them ends in this way:

> 'Tis dangerous to provoke a God;
> His power and vengeance who can tell?
> One stroke of his almighty rod
> Can send his enemies to hell.

The other closes with this picture:

> I lay my garments by,
> Upon my bed to rest;
> So death will soon disrobe my soul,
> And leave it all undressed.

What choice songs for social gatherings of Christians! I have sometimes thought of preparing a volume of "Hymns Jesus Would Not Have Liked." A lot of those in that old hymnal would find a place in it.

Now compare that book with *The Hymnal* of the Presbyterian Church, edited by the choirmaster of that same Brick Church, and published just a hundred and ten years later. What a proof of progress in religion! And yet it has been a sane progress. It has not marked a departure from the old faith, but rather a deepening of it; and it has kept pace with the advancing mind of thoughtful Christians. It marks a real advance in the understanding and spiritual appropriation of the treasures of the spirit which was and is in Jesus Christ our Lord.

If anybody tells you religion is decadent, show him our hymnals. They are among the best proofs that the heart of the Church is sound but eager, loyal but advancing.

Another marked characteristic of our hymns as part of worship is their *catholicity*. It would be hard to find anything in our ordinary church life that more clearly marks this trait. How sadly difficult it is to get Christians together in their faith and order; what a bitter fact that we cannot get together at the Lord's Table. But we are one in our hymns. Many a church that would refuse with indignation to allow a Unitarian or a Catholic in its pulpit sings with joy hymns written by one or the other.

Lately I studied a list of composers of hymns, found in a fairly good hymnal, which gives in its index the denominational position of each. Some of the results will interest you, I believe.

Out of about 500 hymns, 190 are from Episcopalians, 76 from Congregationalists, 58 from Presbyterians, and others from some ten more religious bodies. But the notable fact is that 52 were written by Unitarians, and 30 by Roman Catholics. It was a hymnal prepared for use in orthodox Protestant churches.

I thought, suppose it were known that on some Sunday a Unitarian would take part in the worship of a Presbyterian church, what a storm would arise! But in many a Presbyterian church all would rise and sing with joy, "Lord of All Being, throned afar," "In the cross of Christ I glory," and "Nearer, my God, to thee," and find comfort and strength in these three hymns composed by Unitarians. In churches of all orders the

people gladly sing "Crown him with many crowns" and "Faith of our fathers," both written by Roman Catholics. What of it? We find God's truth and beauty in those hymns, and we thank God for them.

I went through that hymnal and selected what seemed to me the fifty hymns best-loved by most intelligent Christians, hymns I felt reasonably certain would be chosen by the people of most churches as favorites. No doubt my personal preferences had some influence, but I did try to restrain them. The interesting result I found was that of those fifty hymns, fifteen were written by Episcopalians, six by Congregationalists, five by Methodists, five by Presbyterians, two by Baptists, two by a Quaker, four by Unitarians, and five by Roman Catholics, while four of them were anonymous. We *do* find a real unity of the spirit in the hymns we sing.

One more splendid fact about hymns let me mention, one rather intimately related to this matter of catholicity. The hymns of the Church have been selected and authenticated not by ecclesiastical authority, but by the common sense of Christians generally.

Of course editors and publishers and committees make their decisions. But they know well that the lasting value of the books they publish will depend on the common sense of the body of Christians who are to use the hymns. The hymns that come to be standardized, with their tunes, are chiefly those which the people of the churches approve and love.

There is an interesting analogy here with the formation of the canon of the New Testament. Highchurchmen like to talk of how it was settled in church councils which writings should be included in the Word of God. But anyone with honest and open mind knows that all the church councils did was to give official sanction to the general Christian judgment. We have in the New Testament the books which Christians generally found to be helpful and inspiring. So is it with our hymnals.

For these and many other reasons it is good and highly important to maintain a society dedicated to the maintenance of a high standard in our hymns and tunes for worship. The statement of aims of this Society is most admirable, inclusive and wise.

Hymns played a great part in the beginning of the Christian movement. That lovely book, *The Gospel According to Luke*, has preserved some of them for us, the Magnificat, the Benedictus, the Gloria in Excelsis, the Nunc Dimittis, all still in use. What noble company has followed in their train!

Paul is often classified as a strict theologian. He was in reality a good deal of a poet, as his noble rhapsody on LOVE reveals. And, hidden away in one of his letters, is a beautiful little exhortation which might well serve as the chosen text from all the Bible for such a Society as this—let me read it in the choice rendering of one of the modern versions:

> Let the inspiration of Christ dwell in your midst with all its wealth of wisdom. Teach and train one another with the music of psalms, with hymns, and songs of the spiritual life; praise God with thankful hearts.

To such service this fellowship is dedicated. May the Spirit of God bless it and extend its influence more and more!

1 God of a Universe Within Whose Bounds

LONGWOOD. 10.10.10.10.

Katharine L. Aller, 1944 — *First Tune* — Joseph Barnby, 1872

With dignity

1. God of a u - ni - verse with - in whose bounds
2. With - in Thy pur-pose, through the a ges' span,
3. By all the grief man's strife with man en - tails,
4. So shall we deal in jus - tice like to Thine;

Thy vast cre - a - tion moves in or - dered space;
We would dis - cern our coun - try's des - tined role:
By all the woe that stalks op - pres - sion's train,
So shall the love of mer - cy light our land,

Sons of a na - tion born in faith and wounds,
In all our coun - cils, man with bro - ther man,
By Thy great sac - ri - fice which still pre - vails,
Mark - ing the foot - prints of the Love Di - vine,

We seek from Thee our true ap - point - ed place.
We would o - bey the law of love's con - trol.
Free us from lust for all un - wor - thy gain.
Where we walk hum - bly, guid - ed by Thy hand. A - men.

5. Lead us into the light that shines from Thee
For all mankind; for ne'er shall it fulfill
Its pure effulgence till all men are free,
Free through the truth which is th' eternal will.

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2 God of a Universe Within Whose Bounds

Katharine L. Aller, 1944

TOULON. 10.10.10.10.
Second Tune

"Genevan Psalter," 1551

Unison, with dignity

1. God of a u - ni - verse with - in whose bounds
2. With - in Thy pur - pose, through the a - ges' span,
3. By all the grief man's strife with man en - tails,
4. So shall we deal in jus - tice like to Thine;

Thy vast cre - a - tion moves in or - dered space;
We would dis - cern our coun - try's des - tined role:
By all the woe that stalks op- pres-sion's train,
So shall the love of mer - cy light our land,

Sons of a na - tion born in faith and wounds,
In all our coun - cils, man with bro - ther man,
By Thy great sac - ri - fice which still pre - vails,
Mark - ing the foot - prints of the Love Di - vine,

We seek from Thee our true ap - point - ed place.
We would o - bey the law of love's con - trol.
Free us from lust for all un - wor - thy gain.
Where we walk hum - bly, guid - ed by Thy hand. A - men.

5. Lead us into the light that shines from Thee
For all mankind; for ne'er shall it fulfill
Its pure effulgence till all men are free,
Free through the truth which is th' eternal will.

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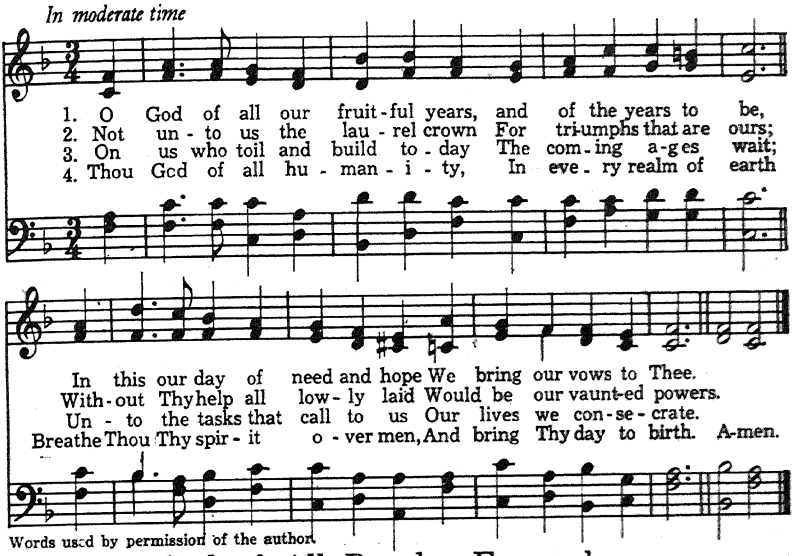
3 O God of All Our Fruitful Years

WINCHESTER OLD. C. M.

Thomas Curtis Clark, 1944 — "Este's Psalter," 1509

In moderate time



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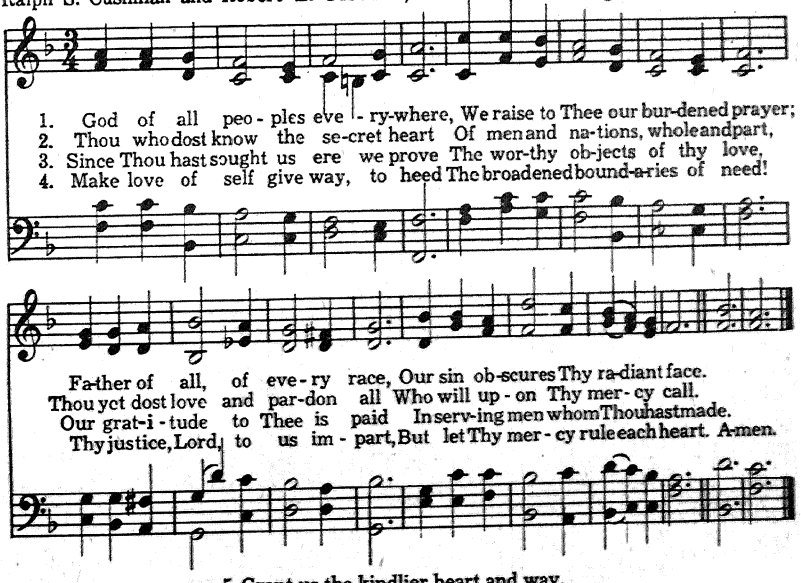
4 God of All Peoples Everywhere

GRACE CHURCH. L. M.

Ralph S. Cushman and Robert E. Cushman, 1943 — Ignaz J. Pleyel, 1815



5. Grant us the kindlier heart and way,
Strength both to labor and to pray;
Unveil the evil that we laud,
Bring in the Brotherhood of God. Amen.

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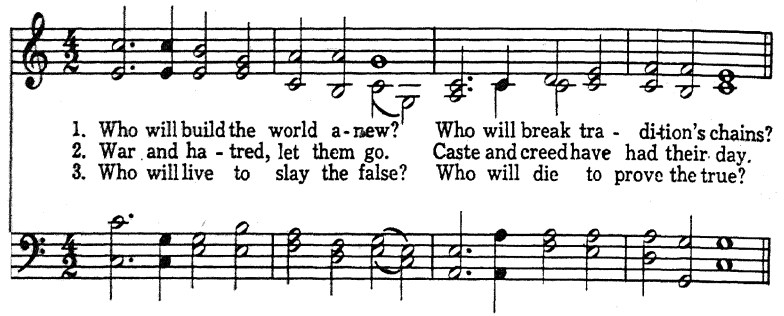
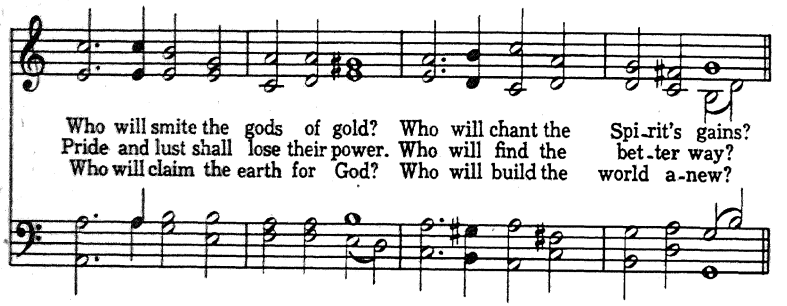
5 Who Will Build the World Anew?

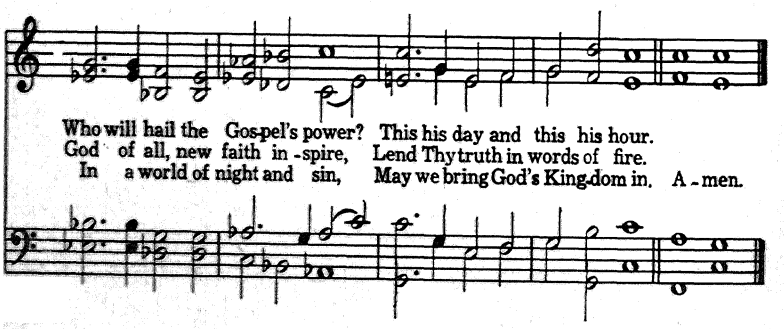
EYRE. 7.7.7.7.7.7.

Thomas Curtis Clark, 1944 — Mary Eyre MacElree, 1946

With dignity







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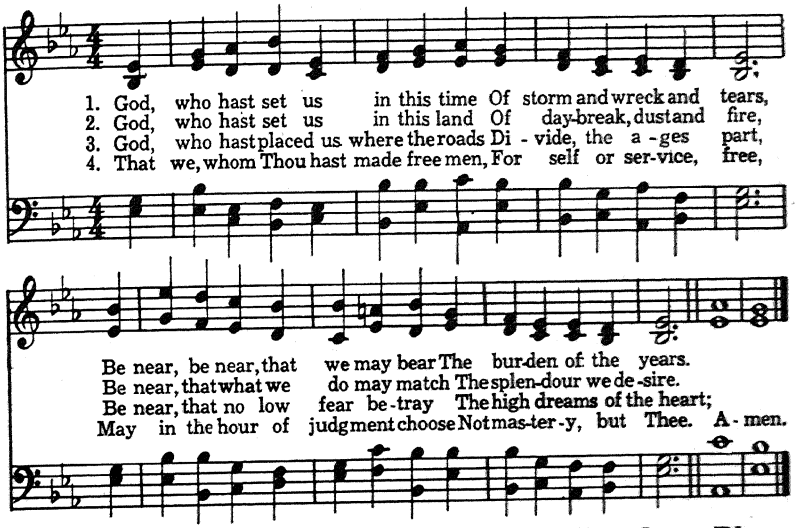
God, Who Has Set Us In This Time

DUNDEE. C. M.

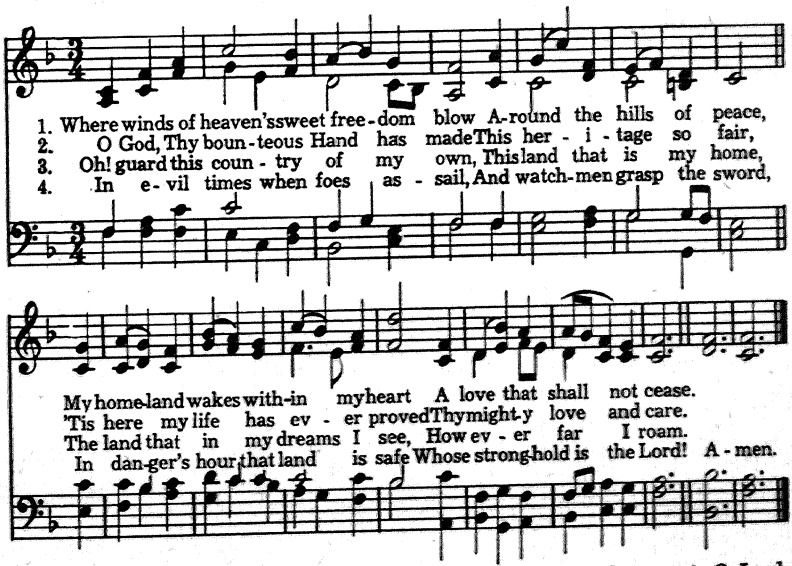
Hermann Hagedorn, 1944 "Scottish Psalter," 1615

In moderate time



7 Where Winds of Heaven's Sweet Freedom Blow

May A. Rowland, 1944 RICHMOND. C. M. Thomas Haweis, 1792



5. Firm in the faith that follows Christ
Let this my nation stand,
That no dishonour stain the flag
That waves o'er this dear land.

6. In Thy great service, grant, O Lord,
That I may give my best,
Until within Thy home above
This loyal heart finds rest.

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Shed Thou, O Lord, Thy Light

MIDLAND. 6.4.6.4. D.

Georgia Harkness, 1944 — Robert Pugh, 1946

Unison, broadly

1. Shed Thou, O Lord, thy light On this strong land.
2. Purge Thou from pride her life; Stay lust for gain;
3. Here let all men be free Un - der Thy sun,

Firm in the ways of right Strong may she stand.
Save from un - ho - ly strife; Let jus - tice reign.
Bound in fra - ter - ni - ty, All peo - ples one.

Make her to all earth kin, Teach her to share;
Make her Thine in - stru-ment To bring earth peace,
Here let Thy truth be power, All deeds be just.

Cleanse her of in ward sin, Lord, hear our prayer.
Good will her ar - ma-ment Till wars shall cease.
Save, Lord, in this grave hour; In Thee we trust. A - men.

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America, the Promised Land

RAWSON. 8.7.8.7.8.8.

Caroline Hazard, 1944

Robert W. Morse, 1946

Unison, with vigor

1. A-mer-i-ca, the prom-ised land. The child of all the
2. In thee they build-ed them their state, On free-dom it was
3. Ful-fill for all the wait-ing world, Ful-fill thy prom-ise

na-tions, Thy fa-thers left their na-tive strand And
found-ed With e-qual rights they made it great, By
splen-did. Thy flag shall proud-ly be un-furled By

faced the des-o-la-tions Of wild-er-ness and storm-y
lib-er-ty sur-round ed. With loy-al hearts and strong right
God's own might at-tend-ed; Till Free-dom shall vic-to-rious

sea, To find a land which should be free.
hand They made of thee the Prom-ised Land.
stand, And all the earth be Prom-ised Land. A-men.

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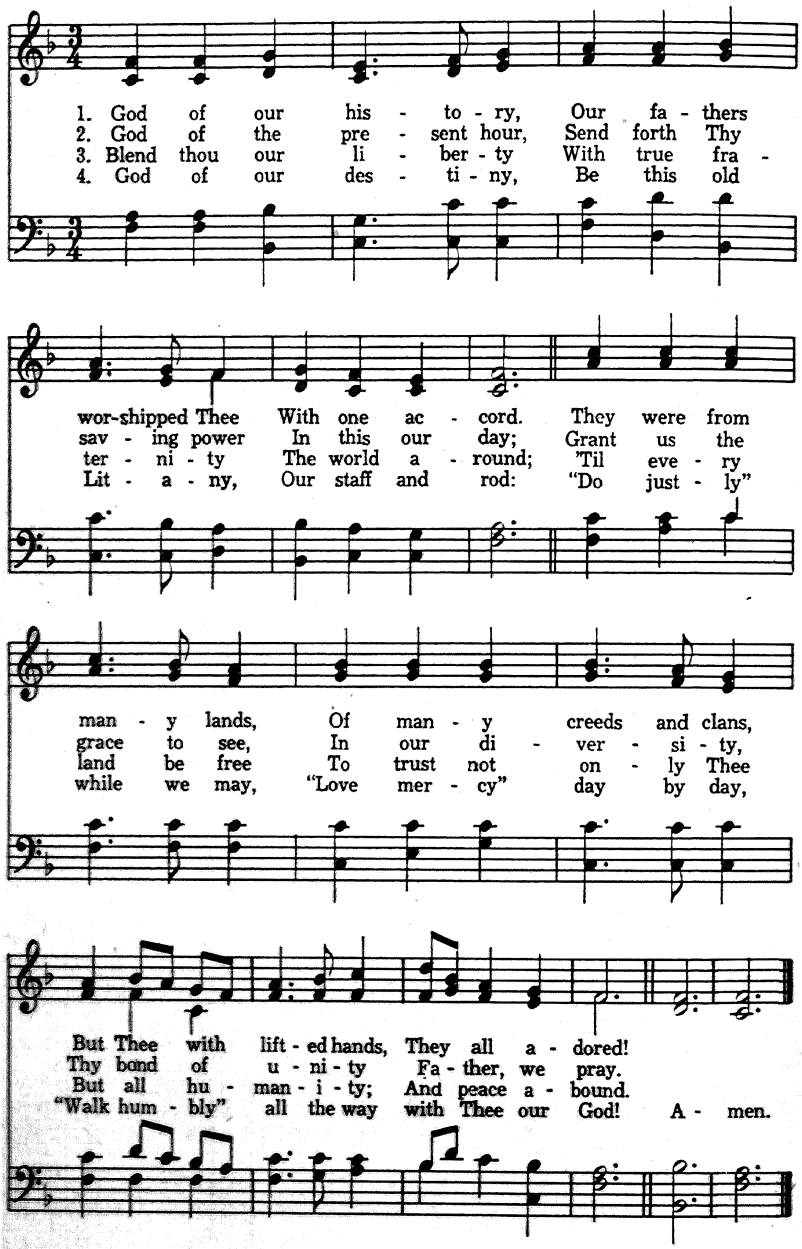
God of Our History

M. Willard Lampe, 1944

AMERICA. 6.6.4.6.6.6.4.
First Tune

"Thesaurus Musica," 1740

1. God of our his - to - ry, Our fa - thers wor-shipped Thee With one ac - cord. They were from man - y lands, Of man - y creeds and clans, But Thee with lift - ed hands, They all a - dored!
2. God of the pre - sent hour, Send forth Thy sav - ing power In this our day; Grant us the grace to see, In our di - ver - si - ty, Thy bond of u - ni - ty Fa - ther, we pray.
3. Blend thou our li - ber - ty With true fra - ter - ni - ty The world a - round; 'Til eve - ry land be free To trust not on - ly Thee But all hu - man - i - ty; And peace a - bound.
4. God of our des - ti - ny, Be this old Lit - a - ny, Our staff and rod: "Do just - ly" while we may, "Love mer - cy" day by day, "Walk hum - bly" all the way with Thee our God! A - men.



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God of Our History

M. Willard Lampe, 1944

DORT. 6.6.4.6.6.6.4.
Second Tune

Lowell Mason, 1832

With martial rhythm

1. God of our his - to - ry, Our fa - thers
2. God of the pre - sent hour, Send forth Thy
3. Blend thou our li - ber - ty With true fra -
4. God of our des - ti - ny, Be this old

wor-shipped Thee With one ac - cord. They were from
sav - ing power In this our day; Grant us the
ter - ni - ty The world a - round; 'Til eve - ry
Lit - a - ny, Our staff and rod: "Do just - ly"

man - y lands, Of man - y creeds and clans,
grace to see, In our di - ver - si - ty,
land be free To trust not on - ly Thee
while we may, "Love mer - cy" day by day,

But Thee with lift - ed hands, They all a - dored!
Thy bond of u - ni - ty Fa - ther, we pray.
But all hu - man - i - ty; And peace a - bound,
"Walk hum - bly" all the way with Thee our God! A - men.

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God of the Spirit-Wind

THORN HILL. 11.10.11.9.

First Tune

Earl Marlatt, 1944 — Robert Pugh, 1946

Unison (not too fast)

1. God of the spir - it wind, whose rush - ing quick - ened
2. Touch us with clo - ven flame, forg - ing for - give - ness,
3. God of the glow - ing love, mak - ing men bro - thers,
4. Then shall Thy spir - it—sons, purged of all ha - tred,

Men of all na - tions to faith in Thy Word,
Fus - ing our hearts in - to fer - vent ac - cord,
Burn out the dross of be - lief in the sword;
Spurn - ing all en - vy and mar - tial re - ward,

Wak - en our cour - age as theirs was a - wak - ened,
Steel - ing our wills with the faith that Thou liv - est,
Fash - ion one vi - sion more gold - en than oth - ers:
Stand a world— na - tion, u - ni - ted and sa - cred,

Breathe out Thy spir - it on us, O Lord.
Tem - per our souls with Thy fire, O Lord.
Peace ev - er - more through Thy mer - cy, Lord.
Pledg - ing e - ter - nal good — will, O Lord. A - men.

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God of the Spirit-Wind

RUSSIAN HYMN. 11.10.11.9.

Earl Marlatt, 1944 — *Second Tune* — Alexis Lwoff, 1833

With majesty; may be in unison

1. God of the spir - it-wind, whose rush - ing quick-ened
2. Touch us with clo - ven flame, forg - ing for - give- ness,
3. God of the glow - ing love, mak - ing men bro - thers,
4. Then shall Thy spir- it-sons, purged of all ha - tred,

Men of all na - tions to faith in Thy Word,
Fus - ing our hearts in - to fer - vent ac - cord,
Burn out the dross of be - lief in the sword;
Spurn - ing all en - vy and mar - tial re - ward,

Wak - en our cour - age as theirs was a - wak-ened,
Steel - ing our wills with the faith that Thou liv - est,
Fash - ion one vi - sion more gold - en than oth - ers:
Stand a world na - tion, u - ni - ted and sa - cred,

Breathe out Thy spir - it on us, O Lord.
Tem - per our souls with Thy fire, O Lord.
Peace ev - er - more through Thy mer - cy, Lord.
Pledg - ing e - ter - nal good-will, O Lord. A - men.

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Long Ago a Prophet Sang

William P. Merrill, 1944

PROPHET. 7.7.7.7.7.7.
First Tune

Austin C. Lovelace, 1946

With firm rhythm

1. Long a - go a pro - phet sang Of a
2. Faith - ful must that ser - vant be, Not to
3. Pa - tience will that ser - vant need, Not to
4. Through such ser - vice, no - thing less, Can the

na - tion that should be Ser - vant un - to God and man, And should
fal - ter or de - spair, Till through-out the earth he see Jus - tice
wea - ry or re - lax, Not to break the bruis - ed reed, Not to
curse of war - fare cease; On - ly out of right-eous - ness Can there

(Unison) *slightly slower*

set the na - tions free. God, our Fa - ther, by Thy grace
reign-ing eve - ry - where. God, we pray Thee from the heart,
quench the smok - ing flax. Grant us, Lord, in this dear land,
come the fruit of peace. Lead us, Lord, we hum - bly pray,

Harmony

May our coun - try fill that place.
Help our coun - try play that part.
Grace to know and un - der - stand.
In that one and on - ly way. A - - men.

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15 Long Ago a Prophet Sang

ST. ATHANASIUS. 7.7.7.7.7.7.

William P. Merrill, 1944 — *Second Tune* — Edward J. Hopkins, 1872

With animation

1. Long a - go a pro - phet sang Of a na - tion that should be
2. Faith-ful must that ser - vant be, Not to fal - ter or de-spair,
3. Pa-tience will that ser - vant need, Not to wea - ry or re-lax,
4. Through such ser-vice, no-thing less, Can the curse of war-fare cease;

Ser - vant un - to God and man, And should set the na - tions free.
Till through-out the earth he see Jus - tice reign - ing eve - ry-where.
Not to break the bruis - ed reed, Not to quench the smok - ing flax.
On - ly out of right-eous - ness Can there come the fruit of peace.

God, our Fa-ther, by Thy grace May our coun-try fill that place.
God, we pray Thee from the heart, Help our coun-try play that part.
Grant us, Lord, in this dear land, Grace to know and un-der-stand.
Lead us, Lord, we hum-bly pray, In that one and on - ly way. A-men.

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16 Rise Up, O World, the Light is On the Hill

FOWKES. 10.10.10.10.10.10.

William L. Stidger, 1944 — *First Tune* — Frank K. Owen, 1946

Unison

1. Rise up, O World, the light is on the hill: Face val-iant - ly the
2. Have zeal, O World, the new dawn ris-es high From out the mists of
3. Have hope, O World, 'tis thine to seek and find The ev- er - last - ing
4. Have faith, O World, that all is well and good: March for-ward to this

work that lies a - head: Thine is the task to do Thy Master's will:
dark-ness and of war; The sun of hope is rid-ing in the sky,
se- cret of the skies; That hu-man hearts can still be good and kind!
brave, new dawn of hope; Send forth the bu - gle call of bro-ther-hood

To this great day His might Hand has led; God's bu-gles blow, the
The sound of death and weep-ing is no more. Stand forth, march on, the
The flag of faith for - ev- er brave-ly flies A-bove the cross-crowned
Where men in ter - ror blind-ly reach and grope. It is the Chris - tian

dawn of light is here; Stand on Thy feet and put a-way Thy fear!
far peaks are a - gleam; It is the dawn of an Im-mor-tal Dream!
hill of Cal-va - ry, And points the way to man's great desti-ny!
Day, let an-thems ring; Let eve-ry Chris - tian heart in glo-ry sing! A-men.

Note: the first pedal note of the tune may be omitted after the first stanza.

Words used by permission of the author

17 Rise Up, O World, the Light is On the Hill

FINLANDIA. 10.10.10.10.10.10.

Second Tune

William L. Stidger, 1944 — Jean Sibelius

In flowing rhythm

1. Rise up, O World, the light is on the hill: Face val-iant-ly the work that lies a-head: Thine is the task to do Thy Mas-ter's will:
2. Have zeal, O World, the new dawn ris-es high From out the mists of dark-ness and of war; The sun of hope is rid-ing in the sky,
3. Have hope, O World, 'tis thine to seek and find The ev-er-last-ing se-cret of the skies; That hu-man hearts can still be good and kind!
4. Have faith, O World, that all is well and good: March for-ward to this brave, new dawn of hope; Send forth the bu-gle call of bro-ther-hood

To this great day His might-y Hand has led; God's bu-gles blow, the dawn of light is here; Stand on thy feet and put a-way thy fear!
The sound of death and weep-ing is no more Stand forth, march on, the far peaks are a-gleam; It is the dawn of an Im-mor-tal Dream!
The flag of faith for-ev-er brave-ly flies A-bove the cross-crowned hill of Cal-va-ry, And points the way to man's great des-ti-ny!
Where men in ter-ror blind-ly reach and grope. It is the Chris-tian Day, let an-thems ring; Let eve-ry Chris-tian heart in glo-ry sing! A-men.

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NOTES ON THE TUNES

The problem of finding musical settings for the Twelve Hymns of Christian Patriotism, Hymn Society Paper No. XI, was broached in 1945. After careful search, existing tunes of high quality were found for five of these hymns, none of them being too closely associated with other hymns.

For the remaining hymns it was decided to seek new tunes, and in the fall of 1945 The American Guild of Organists agreed to issue an invitation to church musicians to write new settings. More than one hundred and fifty tunes were received, and these were examined by three judges selected by its own Tunes Committee, which was appointed by the Warden of the Guild, S. Lewis Elmer, A. A. G. O. The judges recommended seventeen tunes for the consideration of the Hymn Society, of which six tunes were finally accepted. All of these were written in 1946. They are as follows:

Name of tune	Composer	Hymn number
EYRE	Mary Eyre MacElree, F.A.G.O.	5
MIDLAND	Rev. Robert Pugh, R.M.T.	8
RAWSON	Robert W. Morse, A.A.G.O.	9
THORN HILL	Rev. Robert Pugh, R.M.T.	12
PROPHET	Austin C. Lovelace, A.A.G.O.	14
FOWKES	Frank K. Owen, Mus. B.	16

Of the eleven old tunes appearing in this collection, five were composed before the year 1800, two being from the sixteenth century; five during the nineteenth century — three of these in the first third of the century, and two actually in 1872.

It is very encouraging that all together seven tunes were written in the present century; of which six were produced specially for this collection.

The warmest thanks of The Hymn Society of America and of its special Tunes Committee are due to the composers of all the tunes submitted, and to the Warden and Council of the American Guild of Organists, under whose auspices the quest for tunes was conducted.

The members of the Tunes Committee of The Hymn Society are Deane Edwards, Henry Wilder Foote, Earl Enyeart Harper, Reginald L. McAll and Harold V. Milligan (chairman) with the President of the Society, Dr. Tertius Noble.

HAROLD V. MILLIGAN

THE PAPERS OF THE HYMN SOCIETY

CARL F. PRICE *Editor*

XII

Luther and Congregational Song

by

LUTHER D. REED

THE HYMN SOCIETY OF AMERICA

NEW YORK CITY

1947

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CARL F. PRICE, *Editor*

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Copies of these papers at 15 *cents each* may be obtained from the Executive Secretary of the Hymn Society,

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LUTHER AND CONGREGATIONAL SONG

(*Written in the 400th Anniversary year of Luther's death.*)

Thomas Carlyle in his *Sartor Resartus* (Book I, Chap. 2) remarks, "Biography is by nature the most universally profitable and universally pleasant of all things." Intimate and vital study of important personalities against the background of their time convinces us that great moments and great movements in history come to focus in the lives and experiences of great men. Martin Luther was such a man.

The number of books by Luther and books about Luther is amazing. The definitive Weimar edition of *Luthers Werke* (1883-1939) contains sixty-seven volumes of from 600-800 pages each, and the work is still incomplete. Books and articles about Luther number not hundreds, but thousands.

Luther's liturgical and hymnological writings are relatively few and brief, compared with his vast output of sermons, commentaries, university lectures, treatises, correspondence, etc., and historians often fail to recognize their importance. Yet Luther's influence in this field cut deep, travelled far and continues to this day. His Latin and German revisions of the liturgy determined the character of subsequent Lutheran worship in many lands, including our own, and definitely affected the preparation of the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England. His translation of the Bible, which was not unrelated to his reform of worship, was an epoch-making work. His pioneering in the field of congregational song ushered in a new era in public worship.

Another fact not generally appreciated is that his work in theology was so effective because he had the perception and feeling, the powers of expression of an artist, though he probably would not have welcomed the term. This aspect of Luther's work has been brought out particularly by Professor Hans Preuss of the University of Erlangen in his thoroughly documented work on *Luther der Künstler*.[1] Professor Preuss shows how Luther's intellectual and spiritual resources seem not to have developed step by step as in the case of most men, but to have been largely native, instinctive, ever present. He was not only a thinker, but also a prophet; not only a teacher, but also an artist—in a word, a genius whose gifts enabled him to sing and paint in tone and word. He himself said, "Our opponents cannot claim ignorance of the doctrine of the Gospel, since we have preached, written, painted and sung it."

[1] Preuss, Hans. *Martin Luther der Künstler*. Gütersloh, Bertelsmann, 1931.

First, let us consider Luther as poet and musician. In addition to possessing fine natural gifts, Luther had good training in music. In Mansfeld as a boy he regularly put on his choir vestments and sang in the church. At Magdeburg and Eisenach he studied singing. At Erfurt he extended his musical studies and began to compose and play the lute. In the monastery he learned Plain Song and the whole liturgical system of the Church. Professor Otto Scheel of the University of Tübingen in his fine study of Luther's formative years in the home, the school, the university and the monastery, vividly describes this early churchly training.[2] As the young Luther learned to chant the psalms and sing the Gloria, the Sanctus, the Magnificat and the Te Deum, he learned more than the Latin language or how to use his voice, or the mastery of ecclesiastical technique. The church services of his youth lifted his heart to the heights. They involved a real experience and gave his soul deep spiritual satisfactions. In later years he came to know and rebuke the errors which disfigured some of the texts, but he never lost his appreciation of the spiritual values in ordered public worship and in the use of historic liturgical forms, made vocal and beautiful by appropriate music.

Luther regarded music as more than a human invention. To him it was one of the greatest gifts of God, an essential part of his own personal piety and of his churchly program. In this respect he stands in sharp contrast to the other great reformers.

There was nearly always a musical period in Luther's home after the evening meal. Luther himself had a good tenor voice, clear and sonorous, though not particularly powerful. Ratzeberger, his house physician, records how he took the music parts from his desk and distributed them, and then sang the Gregorian responsories of the Seasons with his sons, Martin and Paul, and polyphonic compositions with his older friends.

For, in addition to his interest in hymnody and his knowledge of the ancient Plain Song and the music of the liturgy, Luther was quite familiar with the motets and other polyphonic compositions of his time—a vast literature of complicated, artistically interesting music. Josquin des Près, the Flemish composer, was his favorite. He said: "Josquin is the master of the notes, they must do as he wishes; other musicians do as the notes say." He appreciated the motets of Ludwig Senfl and said, "I could not compose such a motet if I were to tear myself to pieces, just as he for his part could not preach a sermon like mine."

Luther knew and loved the great Latin poets. He took copies of Virgil and Plautus with him into the cloister. He wrote Latin verse

[2] Scheel, Otto. *Martin Luther; vom Katholizismus zur Reformation.* Tübingen, Mohr, 1917. 2v.

with facility—to his daughter Magdalena, or to his colleague Jonas. At times, when ill in bed, he would write polemic verses against Erasmus or pen tender Latin paraphrases of the psalms.

Luther professed that he was no poet. He wrote to the humanist Eobanus Hess, "You are the king of poets and the poet of kings. I am no poet" (in the sense of the humanistic makers of elegant Latin verse). Yet who knows of Eobanus Hess today, while Luther's hymns are known and sung by millions.

Luther's peculiar genius came to fullest expression in the German language. Professor Preuss thinks that he probably did not fully realize his poetic gifts until 1524 when he was forty years old. Encouraged by the progress of his work and in good spirits, he felt an inner compulsion to express the joy of the Gospel in hymns as David had done in psalms. In 1524, five years before his German Catechism, he published his German Psalms in Wittenberg after the example of the psalmist.

In the field of music, Luther was not a Meistersinger with highly developed technical qualifications. His work was elemental, of the people, rough in rhyme and meter. The child and the hero are blended in one. His verses are manly, and at times they appear childlike, but they never are feminine, as were the Latin forms of the humanists. Similarly his thought is direct and powerful in contrast to the frequent sentimentality and grandiloquence of later pietistic and rationalistic hymn writers. Luther was very free in the choice of varying rhymes, corresponding to mood. One-half of his hymns have no rhyme at all in their concluding lines, a "volkstümliche" characteristic resembling the madrigals. Scriptural, churchly training, simplicity, strength, reverence and joyous, confident faith breathe in all his hymns.

One may venture the thought that in depth, vigor and profound religious feeling Luther's hymns stand in close kinship with Dürer's wood engravings, and Bach's music. One may even suggest that modern art—in painting, music, architecture—has much in common with Luther, so far as handling of material is concerned. Many modern expressions in this field lack the essential religious content and goal evident in all of Luther's work. But in breadth, vigor, in qualities of elemental power and forthrightness and in concentration upon mass rather than detail, they speak Luther's language.

It must further be said, however, that while much modern art is brutal, sordid and utterly man-centered, without God and devoid of hope, Luther's strength is tempered by tenderness and humility, reverence and joyful thanksgiving. His thought grasps not only sin, and its human problems, but also divine love and grace and salvation.

Thus the everlasting Gospel of the Grace of God, as revealed in Jesus Christ, is the theme of all his hymns, a theme expressed in infinite variety of mood and form.

Luther's hymn writing was definitely related to his reform of the liturgy. When he wished to promote congregational participation in worship there was nothing at hand that he could use except some specimens of a mongrel type of Latin and German hymn in which the people sang the German lines, and a few German hymns and folk songs full of invocations of the Virgin and the saints. He solved his problem by making an entirely fresh approach to the Latin hymns of the Breviary, the Latin texts of the psalms and the liturgy.

Luther began his hymn writing in 1523, the year of his first and greatest liturgical writing, which was a revision of the Latin Mass.[3] The end of the year 1524 saw no less than twenty-four of his thirty-six hymns in print.

Dr. Helena A. Dickinson in her interesting and able paper at the spring meeting of the Hymn Society, May, 1946, discussed Luther's use of hymns in his German Mass of 1526.[4] Unlike other reformers, Luther kept the historic Order of the Mass, and in addition to suggesting the use of German hymns here and there during the services, he translated into German verse parts of the litany which the choir traditionally sang in Latin, and set chorale melodies to them for the people to sing. This not only preserved the various parts of the historic Order of the Mass, but also gave the people a welcome part in the service and added a great impulse to congregational singing. The German texts, however, were rough, and one unfortunate result was that, in many parts of Germany, the people never learned the actual texts of the liturgy in all their majesty and beauty, and henceforth simply sang the different parts in poor rhymed versions. The liturgy in effect became lost in the hymnal.

The number and the order of appearance of the booklets in which Luther's hymns were first printed are matters upon which scholars still disagree. It is clear, however, that there were four collections which Luther, himself, supervised and for which he wrote prefaces. They were:

1. *Geystliche Gesangk Buchleyn.* Tenor, Wittemberg, 1524. This was prepared in collaboration with Johann Walther, cantor of the Elector Frederick's choir at Torgau, an intimate friend of Luther. In his preface, Luther says that he greatly desired the youth to be trained in music and other arts, and that they should have something wholesome and beneficial to sing instead of love ballads and worldly

[3] *Formula Missae et Communionis pro ecclesia Vuittembergensi.* Martin Luther. Strassburg, Köpffel, 1523. English translation with introduction and notes by Paul Z. Strodach in *Works of Martin Luther.* Phil. United Lutheran Publication House, 1932. v.VI,p.67-117.

[4] *Deudsche Messe und Ordnung Gottis Diensts.* Wittemberg, 1526.

songs. He says: "I do not believe that all the arts are to be destroyed because of the Gospel, as some fanatics declare; on the contrary I would gladly see all arts, especially music, in the service of Him who has given and created them."

2. *Geistliche Lieder auffs new gebessert zu Wittemberg.* Mar. Luth. Gedruckt zu Wittenberg durch Joseph Klug, 1529. This so-called *Klug Gesangbuch* contained twenty-eight hymns by Luther and twenty-six hymns by other authors especially selected by Luther for this collection. In his preface Luther resents the fact that authors have "enlarged and revised" his hymns without his knowledge or permission and have sold them under cover of his name. He appeals to "all who love the pure Word" not to do this lest "the good be lost and only the good-for-nothing kept."

3. *Christliche Geseng Lateinisch und Deudsch, zum Begrebnis.* D. Martinus Luther. Wittemberg, 1542. This, another Klug publication, is unique as not only the first evangelical collection of hymns for use at funerals, but also because of the definitely doctrinal character of its preface which asserts the evangelical view of death and assails the false teaching and practice of the "lazy bellies, evil wolves, godless hogs who persecute and blaspheme God's Word." He declares that in spite of their "pestilential abominations," such as vigils, masses for the dead, purgatory, and "all other mockery and hocus pocus," they have many "admirable, beautiful and musical compositions." "Some of them," he says, "we have had printed in this little book . . . but we have substituted other texts . . . the songs and the notes are precious; it would be a shame and a loss were they to disappear, but the texts or words are un-Christian, unfit and absurd."

This booklet contains five hymns by Luther and two other hymns by Michael Weiss and Aurelius Prudentius.

4. *Geystliche Lieder mit einer newen vorrhede.* D. Mart. Luth. Warnung D.M.L. viel falscher Meister . . . Leipzig, Valentin Babst, 1545. This collection of 129 hymns contains all of Luther's hymns previously published and eight new hymns. Luther's German and Latin litanies are also included and many German translations of Latin collects are scattered throughout the work, which is enriched with wood cuts and ornamental borders.

Friedrich Klippgen in his critical study[5] lists ten other collections which appeared during Luther's life time, among them two of the year 1524. *Etlich christlich lider, Lobgesang und Psalm*, etc. was probably printed in Nuremberg or Strassburg, though the imprint is Wittenberg, 1524. It contains only eight hymns—four by Luther—and is popularly known as the *Achtliederbuch* and "The First Protestant Hymnal," though in all probability it was antedated by Walther's *Gesangk Buchleyn* of the same year. The Erfurt *Enchiridion* contained twenty-five hymns, eighteen of which were by Luther. This apparently was the work of an unknown editor.

Luther wrote thirty-six hymns, to which may be added his German Litany and a poem, "In Praise of Music as the Gift of God." Luther's entire theology comes to expression in his hymns, which include festival hymns, catechetical hymns (Ten Commandments, Lord's Prayer, Baptism, Lord's Supper, etc.), and hymns of comfort, faith

[5] *Martin Luther, Sämtliche deutsche geistliche Lieder in der Reihenfolge ihrer ersten Drucke;* Halle, Niemeyer, 1912.

and trust. Sixteen of his hymns are free renderings from Latin and earlier German sources; seven are paraphrases of the psalms; eight are based upon scripture passages; and only five are entirely original, though there is a strong note of originality in nearly all of his translations and paraphrases.

With respect to tunes, we may take Professor Preuss as our guide. He discusses the dozen melodies ascribed to Luther with relative certainty and answers the Roman scholar, Wilhelm Baeumker,[6] who tried to discredit Luther's work in this field by tracing fragments of *Ein'feste Burg* to pre-Reformation motets and scraps of Plain Song. Preuss shows how the *Missa de Angelis*, in which some of these scraps were supposed to be found, is definitely post-Lutheran, and he stresses the fact now generally understood by historians, that sixteenth century makers of melody were arrangers rather than composers, craftsmen rather than artists. Like the Meistersingers, they provided their texts with melodies which, however, were generally adaptations rather than original features. Luther, with all his force, was respectful of the past and committed to the principle of retaining the best from it. Many of his melodies carried phrases reminiscent of Plain Song and folk song. As developed in a tune like *Ein' Feste Burg*, they became something new and distinctive, if not absolutely original. This melody, certainly, expresses Luther's personality in all its vigor, boldness and joyous confidence.

The following list gives Luther's hymns, with the briefest possible statements concerning sources, date, subject matter, etc. The hymns are arranged alphabetically under the several headings.

Translations from the Latin

1. *Christum wir sollen loben schon* (*1524*)
   Now praise we Christ, the holy One (Massie)

A hymn of eight stanzas on the birth of Christ, a free translation of *A solis ortus cardine*, hymn of composite authorship, the first part ascribed to Sedulius.

2. *Der du bist drei in Einigkeit* (*1543*)
   Thou who art three in unity (Massie)

A hymn of praise to the Holy Trinity, a translation of the eight-line *O lux beata, Trinitas*, ascribed to Ambrose, with an additional stanza by Luther.

3. *Gelobet seist du Jesu Christ* (*1524*)
   All praise to Jesus' hallowed Name (Massie)

A hymn of seven stanzas on the Incarnation, the first stanza a translation of the Latin sequence, *Grates nunc omnes reddamus*, the remaining six stanzas original with Luther.

4. *Herr Gott, dich loben wir* (*1529*)
   Lord God, Thy praise we sing (Massie)

[6] Baeumker, Wilhelm. *Das Katholische deutsche Kirchenlied in seinen Singweisen*. Freiburg, Herder 1883-1911. 4v. (particularly v.1,p.30; v.4,p.691).

A versification of the *Te Deum laudamus*, arranged for antiphonal singing by two choirs.

5. *Jesus Christus unser Heiland (1524)*
   Christ, who freed our souls from danger (Massie)

A cathechetical hymn, in ten stanzas, on the Holy Communion, inspired by John Huss's hymn, *Jesus Christus, nostra salus*, but largely original.

6. *Komm Gott Schöpfer, heiliger Geist (1524)*
   Come God, Creator, Holy Ghost (Massie)

A free translation, in seven stanzas, of the great Latin hymn to the Holy Spirit, *Veni Creator Spiritus*.

7. *Komm Heiliger Geist, Herre Gott (1524)*
   Come, Holy Spirit, God and Lord (Winkworth)

A hymn in three stanzas, eight lines each, to the Holy Spirit. The first stanza is based on the Latin antiphon, *Veni sancte spiritus;* the second and third stanzas are original.

8. *Mitten wir im Leben sind (1524)*
   Though in midst of life we be (Massie)

A hymn in three stanzas of thirteen lines each, "A hymn of triumphs over the grave, death and hell," based upon the Latin antiphon, *Media vita in morte sumus*, ascribed to the Benedictine monk, Notker of St. Gall.

9. *Nun komm der Heiden Heiland (1524)*
   Saviour of the heathen, known (Massie)

A translation in eight stanzas of the Advent hymn, *Veni, Redemptor gentium*, ascribed to Ambrose.

10. *Verleih uns Frieden gnädiglich (1529)*
    In these our days so perilous (Massie)

A brief prayer for peace in one stanza based upon the antiphon, *Da pacem Domine*. Frequently sung in connection with Erhalt uns Herr bei deinem Wort.

11. *Was fürcht'st du, Feind Herodes sehr (1541)*
    Why, Herod, unrelenting foe (Massie)

An Epiphany hymn in five stanzas, the beginning of which is based on the eighth stanza of Sedulius's hymn, *A solis ortus cardine*, this stanza beginning, *Hostis Herodes impie*.

12. *Wir glauben all' an Einen Gott (1524)*
    We all believe in one true God

A versification of the Nicene Creed, *Patrem credimus*, in three stanzas of ten lines each; appointed by Luther for use in his German Mass, 1526.

Reworkings of German Spiritual Folksongs

13. *Christ lag in Todesbanden (1524)*
    Christ was laid in death's strong bands

An Easter hymn in seven stanzas, based, though only slightly, on the 12th century folksong, *Christ ist erstanden*, with traces (fourth and fifth stanzas) of the Latin sequence, *Victimae paschali laudes*.

14. *Gott der Vater wohn uns bei (1524)*
    God the Father, with us stay

A litany hymn in three stanzas of fourteen lines each. The first lines of each stanza are addressed to the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity, respectively, but the rest of the text is identical in all stanzas. Based on an ancient folksong used in Lent and before Ascension Day which Luther claims to have "gebessert und Christlich corrigyret."

15. *Gott sei gelobet und gebenedeiet (1524)*
May God be praised henceforth and blest forever (Massie)

A three-stanza Communion hymn, the first stanza only of which is similar to a pre-Reformation hymn. Every fourth line concludes with *Kyrie Eleison.*

16. *Nun bitten wir den heiligen Geist (1524)*
Now pray we all God, the Comforter (Russell)

A four-stanza hymn for Pentecost, the first stanza based on a twelfth century hymn. The other stanzas are original with Luther who intended this as a post-communion hymn.

Hymns Based on the Psalms

17. *Ach Gott vom Himmel sieh darein* (before *1524*)
Look down, O Lord, from heaven behold (Cox)

A hymn in six stanzas on the Church, her conflicts, needs, strength, etc. A free versification of Psalm 12, *Salvum me fac, Domine.*

18. *Aus tiefer Noth schrei ich zu dir (1524)*
Out of the depths I cry to Thee (Winkworth)

A fine free versification of Psalm 130, *De profundis clamavi ad te;* five stanzas, eight lines each. A hymn of repentance and faith, originally thought of as a funeral hymn.

19. *Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott (1528?)*
A mighty fortress is our God (Composite)

A free versification of the 46th Psalm, *Deus noster refugium et virtus,* in four stanzas of nine lines each, generally regarded as Luther's finest hymn. Probably issued first as a broad-sheet publication.

20. *Es spricht der Unweisen Mund wohl (1524)*
The mouth of fools doth God confess (Massie)

A versification of Psalm 14, *Dixit insipiens in corde suo,* in six stanzas, eight lines each. One of the earliest of Luther's hymns.

21. *Es wollt uns Gott genädig sein (1524)*
May God unto us gracious be (Russell)

A versification of Psalm 67, *Deus misereatur nostri;* perhaps a closing hymn, though a strong missionary character is evident. Three stanzas, nine lines each.

22. *Wär Gott nicht mit uns diese Zeit (1524)*
Had God not come, may Israel say (Massie)

A versification of Psalm 124, *Nisi quia Dominus,* in three stanzas, eight lines each.

23. *Wohl dem der in Gottes Furcht steht (1524)*
Happy the man who feareth God (Massie)

A versification of Psalm 128, *Beati omnes qui timent Dominum.* A hymn on the family in five stanzas, four lines each.

Hymns based on Scripture Passages

24. *Christ unser Herr zum Jordan kam (1541)*
To Jordan came our Lord the Christ (Massie)

A didactic hymn in seven stanzas, nine lines each, on Holy Baptism. Based on Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 16:15, 16.

25. *Dies sind die heiligen zehn Gebot (1524)*
That man a godly life might live (Massie)

A catechetical hymn on the Ten Commandments in twelve stanzas, four lines each with a Kyrie at the end of each stanza.

26. *Jesaja dem Propheten das geschah (1526)*

These things the seer Isaiah did befall (Massie)

A poor versification of the *Sanctus* (Isa. 6:1-4) in the Communion Service, written for the German Mass, 1526.

27. *Mensch willt du leben seliglich (1524)*

Wilt thou, O man, live happily (Massie)

A brief cathechetical hymn, six stanzas, based on the Ten Commandments. Companion hymn to No. 25.

28. *Mit Fried' und Freud' ich fahr' dahin (1524)*

In peace and joy I now depart

A four-stanza versification of the *Nunc Dimittis* (Simeon's Song, Luke 2:29-32) and the best of the renderings of liturgical texts. Frequently used as a funeral hymn.

29. *Sie ist mir lieb, die werthe Magd (1535)*

Dear is to me the holy Maid (Massie)

A hymn on the Christian Church in three stanzas of twelve lines each. Based on Rev. 12:1-6.

30. *Vater unser im Himmelreich (1539)*

Our Father, Thou in heaven above (Winkworth)

A fine paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9-13) in nine stanzas, six lines each.

31. *Vom Himmel hoch da kam ich her (1535)*

Good news from heaven the angels bring (Russell)

A fine original Christmas hymn, in fifteen stanzas, four lines each, based on St. Luke. Said to have been written by Luther for his little son Hans.

Entirely Original Hymns

32. *Ein neues Lied wir heben an (1524)*

By help of God I fain would tell (Massie)

Luther's first hymn, a narrative in twelve stanzas, nine lines each, inspired by the martyrdom in Brussels, July 1, 1523, of two Antwerp Augustinians because of their adherence to Luther's teachings. Not intended for congregational use.

33. *Erhalt uns Herr bei deinem Wort (1541?)*

Lord, keep us steadfast in Thy Word (Winkworth)

A hymn in three stanzas, four lines each, written for the choir boys in Wittenberg "to sing against the two archenemies of Christ and His Holy Church, the Pope and the Turks," the latter of whom were even then storming the gates of Vienna.

34. *Jesus Christus unser Heiland, der den Tod überwand (1524)*

Jesus Christ, who came to save

An Easter hymn, three stanzas, four lines each, with Kyrie.

35. *Nun freut euch, lieben Christen g'mein (1523)*

Dear Christians, one and all rejoice (Massie)

One of Luther's earliest hymns, ten stanzas, seven lines each. A hymn on the blessings of redemption by Christ.

36. *Vom Himmel kam der Engel Schar (1543)*

To shepherds as they watched by night (Massie)

A shorter Christmas hymn in six stanzas, four lines, intended to be sung to the tune *Vom Himmel hoch.*

What then, is our inheritance from the great Reformer? Is it anything more than thirty-six hymns and an uncertain number of tunes?

Luther encouraged others to write hymns and chorales, and to collect, edit and adapt fine church music. He insisted that hymns and music must be taught in the schools. "A school teacher must be able to sing or I will have none of him." He encouraged composers and urged princes and civil authorities to support church music societies after ancient choral foundations had been dissolved. Writing to the Elector John, he said: "Kings, princes and lords must support music, for it becomes great potentates and lords to maintain good liberal arts and laws."

These things were important, and we may well say that Luther not only taught the German nation to sing in church, but that he led the way in a significant development in German culture and expression. Peter Lutkin speaks of the German chorale which developed from Luther's efforts as "a type of hymn tune which for dignity, breadth and fundamental worth has remained unexcelled." The spring of congregational song, which Luther's pioneering endeavors uncovered, became a mighty river, whose waters continued to flow freely for more than 250 years, and eventually refreshed all Protestant lands. Koch takes even a wider view and declares, "From the Reformation dates the true rise of the poetic literature of the entire German people;" and Hermann Kretzschmar, while calling Luther a layman in music, regards him as "the most significant of all the laymen who wrought mightily for the development of music since Ambrose."

But this is not all. If we would understand some of the significant differences between the various Protestant communions, in spite of all that they have in common, we must appreciate Luther's whole attitude towards life, religion and worship. This was of such breadth and balance that for a large part of Protestantism at least, the continuity of Christian history, worship and art was preserved, and every encouragement was given the individual to consecrate and develop all his talents and gifts to his Creator and Redeemer. We have come so generally to accept this point of view today that we perhaps fail to recognize how unusual it was in Luther's day, at least among the other great leaders of the Reformation.

Zwingli was an admirable musician, far surpassing Luther in his attainments. He not only sang, but also played the lute, harp, viol, flute, clarinet and horn. Yet he prohibited both instrumental and vocal music in the church. Calvin inaugurated a movement of great importance when he introduced psalm-singing among his followers. But, because his literalistic views of Scripture permitted nothing but

metrical versions of the psalms in worship, church music received from him a very limited development. Cranmer endowed the Church of England with a superb liturgy. He did nothing, however, to encourage hymn singing or church music. Fortunately, after the first shock of the Reformation, musical interests were kept alive in cathedrals and churches in England by local churchmen and musicians, and eventually regained much of their vigor.

Luther, on the contrary, regarded music as having inspiring and creative power,-and he earnestly desired to see it employed in worship. Had his attitude been different there probably would have been no opportunity for the later gifts and achievements of men like Crüger, Nicolai, Franck, Albert, Neumark, Praetorius, Eccard, Klein, or even Bach and Mendelssohn, to say nothing of the later composers such as Albert Becker, Gustav Schreck and many others. These and others like them produced a vast body of chorales, and a wealth of choral music based upon chorales. This ranged from harmonized chorales in four, six and eight parts to motets, cantatas and full scored Passions. A much later and a really superb body of organ music developed from the same thematic foundations—chorale preludes, fugues, etc., by giants like Bach and Mendelssohn, and in our own day, Brahms, Reger and Karg-Elert.

Thus Luther's efforts and encouragement set in motion creative forces which within two centuries transferred leadership in the field of church music from Italy to Germany, and prepared the way for the noble achievements of Johann Sebastian Bach. So significant was this development that Oswald Spengler in his *Decline of the West* makes the observation that, while Roman Catholicism's greatest contribution to art was in the field of painting, Protestantism's greatest contribution is in the field of choral music.

Luther's work and ideals in time crossed all frontiers, and hymn-singing eventually became part of Protestant worship everywhere. This, however, was long delayed among English-speaking peoples. John Brownlie, Scotch clergyman, who enriched Protestant hymnody with fine translations of ancient Greek hymns, says in his *Hymns and Hymnwriters* (p. 54), "Germany became the home of sacred song. We can say that of no other country . . . To put it very plainly, Germany at the Reformation became Lutheran, not Calvinistic. Only now in the end of the years we are beginning to realize what we have known all along but have not felt at liberty to express, that the beautiful things are the things of God." This is precisely the way Luther thought about it. His position has been amply justified by history. The spiritual descendants of the other great Reformers endeavored to divorce beauty from goodness and truth. Rejecting the ministry of

art in worship, they impoverished not only their services, but also their lives. Most regrettable of all, they soon lost the power to produce liturgical art of any kind.

Thankfully we note ancient objections and prejudices broken down, art welcomed in worship and the service of the Gospel, quite as Luther proposed. Joyfully we recognize the rich contributions in the field of liturgical art, and particularly hymnody, made by virtually all Protestant communions during the last century. In fact we must go back more than two centuries to find Isaac Watts, dissatisfied with the crude psalmody of his time, leading the English-speaking people, who up to this moment had been psalm-singers and not hymn-singers, into a new and beautiful recognition of the spiritual values of hymnody. Here, too, we find the Wesleys, aflame with apostolic zeal, and appreciating the power of congregational song, laboring mightily in this field. Gratefully we recognize the cultivated appreciations and creative efforts of authors and composers in the Church of England, too numerous to mention, who, under the inspiration of the Oxford Movement a century ago, uncovered in beautiful translations the glories of Greek, Latin and German hymnody, and established and still hold leadership in the modern development of English and American hymnody with its high literary, liturgical and musical values.

One more thing remains to be said. When we speak of Luther's broad outlook and his desire to have music and all the arts welcomed in worship, we must remember that he was not interested in music as music, or in art as art. Luther was no child of the Renaissance. He was a Prophet of the Reformation—first of all a priest, and only secondarily a poet and maker of verses and tunes. His first concern was for the Gospel, the Word of God. Every art, that could carry this message, proclaim the divine plan of salvation and express the joy of souls redeemed and refreshed by divine grace, he welcomed.

Luther was not interested in architecture or even greatly in painting and sculpture. These to him had little significance for the Gospel: they seemed rather to speak of episcopal pride and power. The liturgy, the Church Year, hymnody and music—these he instinctively felt gave vital presentations of the Word of God.

Luther's hymns have Christ as the center: they throw light upon His life and work, they call for faith in Him. Taken as a whole, they develop the full plan of salvation and reveal the Christian life as a constant struggle between the believer and the world, but a struggle in which justifying faith gives inward joy and peace. If all our Bibles were destroyed we could reconstruct essential Christian belief and the divine plan of salvation from Luther's hymns.

If Luther were a member of the Hymn Society today he would not be particularly interested in polished verse or pleasing tunes. Content would be more important to him than form. He would recognize the claims of beauty as well as those of truth and goodness, and he would welcome the ministry of art in worship. But he would also be deeply interested in every expression, whether particularly artistic or not, of positive Christian faith. He would appreciate, as he always did, the noble tradition of liturgical worship enriched and empowered by great music. But he would insist upon an emphasis in Christian worship upon essential Christianity, a body of belief which rests firmly upon scriptural foundations.

Thus we see that the essential strength of Luther's work in this field is not to be found in the inspiration of a new idea, the quality of his gifts as poet and composer, or the force of personal leadership or national influence. It lies in the depth of his faith in God and his Pauline conception of the divine plan of salvation.

Luther was one of the world's greatest figures because he was a great Christian, a humble believer in the truth of God's Holy Word, a consecrated minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

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THE PAPERS OF THE
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XIII

Isaac Watts and his Contribution to English Hymnody

by

NORMAN VICTOR HOPE

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ISAAC WATTS AND HIS CONTRIBUTION TO ENGLISH HYMNODY[1]

In any account of the development of the English hymn, the name of Isaac Watts must occupy a place of high honor. To be sure, it would doubtless be correct to say that the very greatest of all English hymn-writers was not Watts, but Charles Wesley. But even so, it may well be thought that Watts's over all contribution to English hymnody was at least as great as that of any other, Wesley included.

The chief facts concerning the life of Isaac Watts can be briefly summarized. He was born in Southampton, England, on July 17, 1674, the son of a Dissenting schoolmaster who later went into business. Since during the reign of King Charles II (1660–85) Nonconformity was penalized by law in England, Watts's father—like such other Dissenters as John Bunyan—more than once went to prison for his religious convictions. Young Watts received his early education at the Grammar School of his native town, which he attended from 1680 till 1690. At that time, and indeed down to the nineteenth century, Nonconformists were debarred from the two English universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Accordingly, Watts pursued his higher studies at the Dissenting Academy at Stoke Newington, London, between 1690 and 1694. As the late Bernard L. Manning has pointed out, such academies as the one at which Watts studied had at least one notable advantage over the older universities at that time, inasmuch as they developed a wider conception of education, in which not only mathematics and classics, but also philosophy, natural science, history and modern languages found a place. Thus Watts was enabled to lay the foundations of a wide and varied scholarship.

After leaving the Academy, Watts spent the next two years at home in Southampton. In 1696 he became tutor to the family of Sir John Hartopp, a well-known London Nonconformist, with whom he remained until 1702. Between 1699 and 1702 Watts acted as part-time assistant to the Rev. Dr. Isaac Chauncey, minister of the important Independent (i.e., Congregational) chapel at Mark Lane, London, of which Hartopp was a member; and in the latter year he was installed as sole pastor. Ill-health, however, dogged his footsteps almost from the very outset of his ministry. As early as 1703 Watts was obliged to seek pulpit assistance from the Rev. Samuel Price, who in 1713 was given the official status of co-pastor. So deeply

[1] Dr. Hope, formerly of Edinburgh, Scotland, now Professor of Church History in Princeton Theological Seminary, N. J., has written this paper in anticipation of the Bicentenary of the Death of Isaac Watts, to be observed in November, 1948.

entrenched was Watts, however, in the loyalty and affection of his people, that he was not allowed to sever his official connection with the congregation, of which he remained senior minister all the rest of his life. About this time—the exact date is not quite certain, but it must have been between 1712 and 1714—Watts accepted the invitation of a wealthy friend, Sir Thomas Abney by name, to live in his (Abney's) home, first in the country at Theobalds, in Hertfordshire, and then at Stoke Newington, London; and in the Abney home he remained as an honored guest until his death in 1748.

Watts never married. So far as is known, the only lady to whom he ever proposed was a Miss Elizabeth Singer, afterwards Mrs. Thomas Rowe. Miss Singer, who was something of a poetess herself, had been greatly attracted by Watts's writings. But when the two of them met, though Watts fell deeply in love with her, she was so disappointed by his ungainly and unprepossessing appearance that she declined to be his wife, adding—not perhaps very tactfully or graciously — "Mr. Watts, I only wish I could say that I admire the casket as much as I admire the jewel." Thereafter Watts, while retaining this lady's staunch friendship to the end of her life, remained a bachelor.

Though he was never in robust health, Watts managed to crowd into his life a large volume of literary activity:

I. He wrote educational treatises, of which the most important were (a) his "Logic, or the Right Use of Reason in the Enquiry after Truth," 1724, which was for many years used as a text-book at Oxford University and other educational institutions; and (b) his "Knowledge of the Heavens and Earth Made Easy," 1725.

II. Watts composed several works of controversial divinity, such as "The Christian Doctrine of the Trinity," 1722, "Dissertations Relating to the Christian Doctrine of the Trinity," 1725, and "Useful and Important Questions Concerning Jesus the Son of God," 1746. Some of his theological writings caused him to be accused of Arian heresy, i.e. denial of the full and essential deity of Jesus Christ, but without sufficient justification.

III. Watts's poetical volume, "Horæ Lyricæ: Poems Chiefly of the Lyric Kind," published in 1706, caused Dr. Samuel Johnson, the eminent eighteenth century literary critic, to include Watts in his famous "Lives of the Poets," 1781, which has been described as "perhaps the greatest body of critical opinion in the English language." There Dr. Johnson appraises Watts's poetry thus: "As a poet, had he been only a poet, he would probably have stood high among the authors with whom he is now associated. For his judg-

ment was exact, and he noted beauties and faults with very nice discernment; his imagination, as the 'Dacian Battle' proves, was vigorous and effective, and the stores of knowledge were large by which his fancy was to be supplied. His ear was well-tuned, and his diction was elegant and copious; but his devotional poetry is, like that of others, unsatisfactory. The paucity of its topics enforces perpetual repetition, and the sanctity of the matter rejects the ornaments of figurative diction. It is sufficient for Watts to have done better than others what no man has done well." This volume of Watts's poems, it may be noted, after running through many editions, was reissued in 1834 in a series of "Sacred Classics," with a memoir of the author by Robert Southey, the then Poet Laureate of Great Britain.

But unquestionably Watts's sacred songs are his greatest literary as well as religious achievement; and it is by them that he will always be remembered. It appears that he began to compose hymns in the following circumstances. One Sunday, in or about the year 1695, Watts, returning home from the Independent service — he was then living with his parents at Southampton — complained about the uncouthness of the psalms which had been sung, declaring them to be lacking in both beauty and dignity. "Try then," said his father, "whether you can produce something better." Taking up this challenge, young Watts bent his energies to the task, and in due course produced the well-known hymn whose first three stanzas run thus:

Behold the glories of the Lamb
  Amidst His Father's throne;
Prepare new honors for His name,
  And songs before unknown.

Let elders worship at His feet,
  The Church adore around,
With vials full of odors sweet,
  And harps of sweeter sound;

These are the prayers of all the saints,
  And these the hymns they raise.
Jesus is kind to our complaints,
  He loves to hear our praise.

This was the beginning of a prolific career of hymn-writing. Watts's hymns, numbering around seven hundred and fifty in all, were scattered in the pages of seven different works:

"Horæ Lyricæ," 1706; second edition 1709.
"Hymns and Spiritual Songs," 1707; second edition 1709.
"Divine and Moral Songs," 1715.
"Psalms of David," 1719.
"Sermons," 1721–27.
"Reliquiæ Juveniles," 1734.
"Remnants of Time," 1736.

But it is not unfair to say that the best of his hymns were written by 1719; thereafter, though he continued to compose and to publish, his inspiration seemed to falter and fail.

How are Watts's hymns to be characterized? They deal with the central themes of the Christian faith, from that strictly Calvinistic point of view in which he was brought up and which he sincerely held. They emphasize the brevity, weakness, and general unsatisfactoriness of human life apart from God, as in the stanza:

How vain are all things here below,
  How false, and yet how fair!
Each pleasure hath its poison too,
  And every sweet a snare.

They dwell upon the glory of Jesus Christ's incarnation, death, resurrection, ascension, and present intercession, as in the lines:

Jesus, my Great High Priest,
  Offered His blood and died;
My guilty conscience seeks
  No sacrifice beside;
His powerful blood did once atone,
And now it pleads before the throne.

And they picture the fate of the lost in fearsome terms, as in the stanza:

There is a dreadful hell,
  And everlasting pains;
Where sinners must with devils dwell
  In dungeons, fire, and chains.

As might be expected in an author so prolific, the hymns of Watts are of uneven poetical quality. He can be appallingly, almost incredibly, prosaic and can write sheer doggerel, as in such lines as these:

Let dogs delight to bark and bite,
  For God hath made them so;
Let bears and lions growl and fight,
  For 'tis their nature to; or

Birds in their little nests agree,
  And 'tis a shameful sight
When children of one family
  Fall out, and chide, and fight; or

The tulip and the butterfly
Appear in gayer coats than I;
Let me be drest fine as I will,
Flies, worms, and flowers exceed me still.

In some cases Watts does not manage his rhymes very gracefully, in this matter comparing unfavorably with Charles Wesley. Thus, he writes:

Not all the outward forms on earth,
  Nor rites that God has given,
Nor will of man, nor blood, nor birth,
  Can raise the soul to heaven.

The sovereign will of God alone
  Creates us heirs of grace,
Born in the image of His Son,
  A new peculiar race.

But when every defect in Watts's hymns has been freely admitted, it remains true that he rendered three outstanding services to English hymnody:

I. He, more than anyone else, created for the singing of hymns that place which it has always subsequently retained in English services of public worship. Lord Selborne has called Watts "the father of English hymnody;" and Bernard L. Manning has said that "to Watts more than any other man, is due the triumph of the hymn in English worship. All later hymn-writers, even when they excel him, are his debtors."

Among the Protestant reformers of the sixteenth century, there were two quite contrasted views concerning the propriety of singing hymns "of human composition" at Christian public worship. On the one hand, Martin Luther, influenced by his love of German folk-song and his regard for the Latin hymns of the Catholic Church, strongly favored the singing of vernacular hymns by worshipping congregations. He not only composed thirty-seven hymns himself — the most famous of which, of course, is "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott"—but he also began a tradition of hymn composition in the Lutheran Church which found worthy expression in hymnists like Paul Gerhardt (1607–76).

John Calvin, on the other hand, disgusted with the frivolity of contemporary French song, averse to everything which savored of Romanism, and hostile to anything which might seem to detract from the paramount authority of Holy Scripture, from the outset of his ministry in Geneva set his face against the introduction of "human hymns." All that he would permit for use in congregational praise were metrical versions of Bible passages, particularly the psalms.

Under the influence of Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, England at the Reformation followed the Calvinistic pattern of public praise, as Scotland did under John Knox and Andrew Melville. From the Reformation down to the end of the seventeenth century, the staple of public praise in England, both in Anglican and Nonconformist churches, consisted of metrical psalms. Of these the most widely used version was that of Sternhold and Hopkins, which, issued in 1561–2, achieved such widespread popularity as to acquire something of the character of "an almost authorized psalm book." This "Old Version," as it came to be called, — despite its popularity — left much to be desired from the literary point of view. Indeed, one authority says that "for literary use, it must be confessed to be almost dead. The likeness to the Hebrew is that of the corpse to the living body." And another critic, hearing a parish clerk sing these psalms, expressed his views in the following epigram:

Sternhold and Hopkins had great qualms,
When they translated David's psalms,
  To make the heart right glad;
But had it been King David's fate,
To hear thee sing and them translate,
  By — , 'twould set him mad.

As can readily be imagined, under those circumstances congregational praise was in a parlous state. Isaac Watts, in the preface to his "Hymns" in 1707, described the situation, probably without much exaggeration, thus: "While we sing the praises of God in His Church we are employed in that part of worship which of all others is nearest akin to heaven; and it is a pity that this should be performed the worst upon earth... To see the dull indifference, the neglect and the thoughtless air that sits upon the faces of a whole assembly while the Psalm is on their lips, might tempt even a charitable observer to suspect the fervency of inward religion." "Many ministers and private Christians," he goes on to say, "have long groaned under this inconvenience... At their importunate and repeated requests I have for some years devoted many hours of leisure to this service."

To be sure, even before Watts's day some attempts had been made to remedy this deplorable state of affairs. Thus, in 1696 Messrs Tate and Brady issued their "New Version" of the Psalms; but this, though employed in the London area, did not supersede the "Old Version" on any large scale. Again, other portions of Scripture, besides the psalms, were turned into verse; for example, in 1623 George Wither published his "Hymns and Songs of the Church," the first part of which consisted of Bible paraphrases. Even original hymns, which made no pretence of being based upon any particular passage of Scripture, were written and published in the seventeenth century: for instance, Bishop Thomas Ken (1637–1711) in 1674 published a "Manual of Prayers for the use of the scholars of Winchester College," that school with which he was then associated. This "Manual" contained the injunction, "Be sure to say the Morning and Evening Hymn in your chamber devoutly." Though Ken's morning and evening hymns were not included in his "Manual" until 1694, it seems certain that they were in use not long after the Restoration of 1660. Watts himself, in the preface to his "Hymns" of 1707, declared that some ministers had already begun to use "evangelical hymns." But until Watts published his hymns, the employment of such compositions in public worship in England was very much the exception and not the rule. The late Dr. Louis F. Benson was quite right in affirming that "there was no English Hymnody in any effective sense until the eighteenth century" ("The English Hymn," p. 21). The main begetter of this hymnody was Isaac Watts.

Though it would hardly be correct to say that Watts's hymns achieved universal acclaim overnight, before many years had passed their excellence, both from the religious and the literary point of view, won for them widespread recognition and use. Thus, in 1744

Dr. Philip Doddridge could write to his friend Watts thus: "I congratulate you that by your sacred poetry, especially by your Psalms and your Hymns, you are leading the worship and I trust animating the devotion of myriads in our public assemblies every Sabbath, and in their families and closets every day. This, Sir, at least so far as it relates to the service of the sanctuary, is an unparalleled favor, by which God hath been pleased to distinguish you, I may boldly say it, beyond any of His servants now upon earth." (Quoted by Dr. Louis F. Benson, "The English Hymn," p. 124). So strong a hold, indeed, did Watts's hymns take in Independent circles that, as late as the nineteenth century, there were — so it is said — many older Congregationalists who refused to sing any other hymns, and who kept their seats when such were announced! Thus, under Watts's inspiration, hymns secured that place of importance as vehicles of congregational praise which they have ever since enjoyed in services of public worship in England.

II. Watts, both by his precept and by his example, gave a great impetus to hymn-writing in England. Not merely was he an indefatigable hymn-writer himself; but he also set others to write hymns for public worship and thus follow the trail which he had been so largely instrumental in blazing. The best known of these disciples of Watts is Philip Doddridge (1702–51), his friend and later contemporary. Doddridge composed, among others, such pieces as the communion hymn, "My God, and is Thy table spread," and the advent hymn, "Hark the glad sound, the Saviour comes," besides such other popular hymns as "Awake, my soul, stretch every nerve" and "Ye servants of the Lord." Other disciples of Watts in the field of hymn-writing include men like Simon Browne (1680–1732), the author of the hymns, "O how can they look up to heaven," and "Lord, at Thy feet we sinners lie;" Thomas Gibbons (1720–1785), one of Watts's biographers, who wrote such hymns as "Now let our souls on wings sublime" and "Great God, the nations of the earth;" and Samuel Medley (1738–1799), the author of "Come, join ye saints with heart and voice." Though doubtless these disciples of Watts are not well known to modern congregations, since very few of their compositions are generally included in recent hymnals, they made quite a significant contribution in their day and generation to the stock of hymns suitable for public praise in Christian churches.

Watts's influence as a hymn-writer extended even to Scotland. For example, Ralph Erskine (1685–1752), one of the members of a group who broke away from the Church of Scotland in 1733 and set up ecclesiastical housekeeping on their own account as the "Original

Secession Church," published "Scripture Songs" in 1750–2, in which Watts's hymns were laid under heavy contribution.

III. Watts composed a number of hymns which no subsequent collection laying claim to anything like completeness has been able to omit; and some of his compositions are rightly regarded as among the very greatest hymns in the English language. Of course, many other hymns of his composition have long since passed into well-merited oblivion, from which, it is safe to assert, they will never be disinterred, at any rate for purposes of congregational praise. This is due partly to their defects of construction, to which reference has been made above. In part, again, it is due to changed theological conceptions; for instance, present-day church members, among many of whom the fires of hell melt no ice, could hardly be expected to sing with any gusto a hymn in which the licking flames and sizzling flesh of the nether regions are described with gaunt realism. Again, since Watts's day certain other hymn-writers — for example,. and in particular, Charles Wesley — have produced hymns whose superior merits have caused them to replace some of Watts's compositions in modern collections of hymns for congregational singing.

But at his best Watts deals with the greatest themes of Christian experience, of "ruin, redemption, and regeneration," with a depth of conviction, a grace and dignity, and a cosmic range and sweep, which few hymn-writers have ever equalled, much less surpassed. Obvious examples of such hymns — which are, of course, included in every modern anthology — are, "O God, our help in ages past," "There is a land of pure delight," "Come, we that love the Lord," "Before Jehovah's awful throne," "Blest morning, whose first dawning rays," "Come, let us join our cheerful songs," "I'm not ashamed to own my Lord," and "Jesus shall reign where'er the sun" — a remarkable hymn, considering that it was written long before the beginning of the great modern missionary movement in the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth. Above all, Watts wrote "When I survey the wondrous cross." In the "Life of John Watson," by Sir William Robertson Nicoll, it is recorded that Matthew Arnold, the distinguished English literary critic, on the last day of his life in 1888 attended morning service in the Sefton Park Presbyterian Church, Liverpool, England, in which his brother-in-law, with whom he was staying at the time, was a regular worshipper. The minister of the church, Dr. John Watson, preached a sermon on "The Cross of Christ;" and one of the hymns sung during the service was "When I survey the wondrous cross." Arnold, when he reached his brother-

in-law's home after church, repeated the lines of Watts's hymn, declaring it to be the finest in the English language. Such commendation is praise indeed, coming as it does from Arnold, a critic of fastidious literary taste, who, moreover, had no particular sympathy with English Dissent.

In view of these massive achievements of Watts, it is not surprising that he has been hailed as one of the greatest benefactors of English hymnody. And in this age, which delights to remember and to celebrate significant anniversaries, the bicentenary of his death ought not to pass unnoticed or unrecognized by those who believe in the importance of worthy public praise in the Christian Church.

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